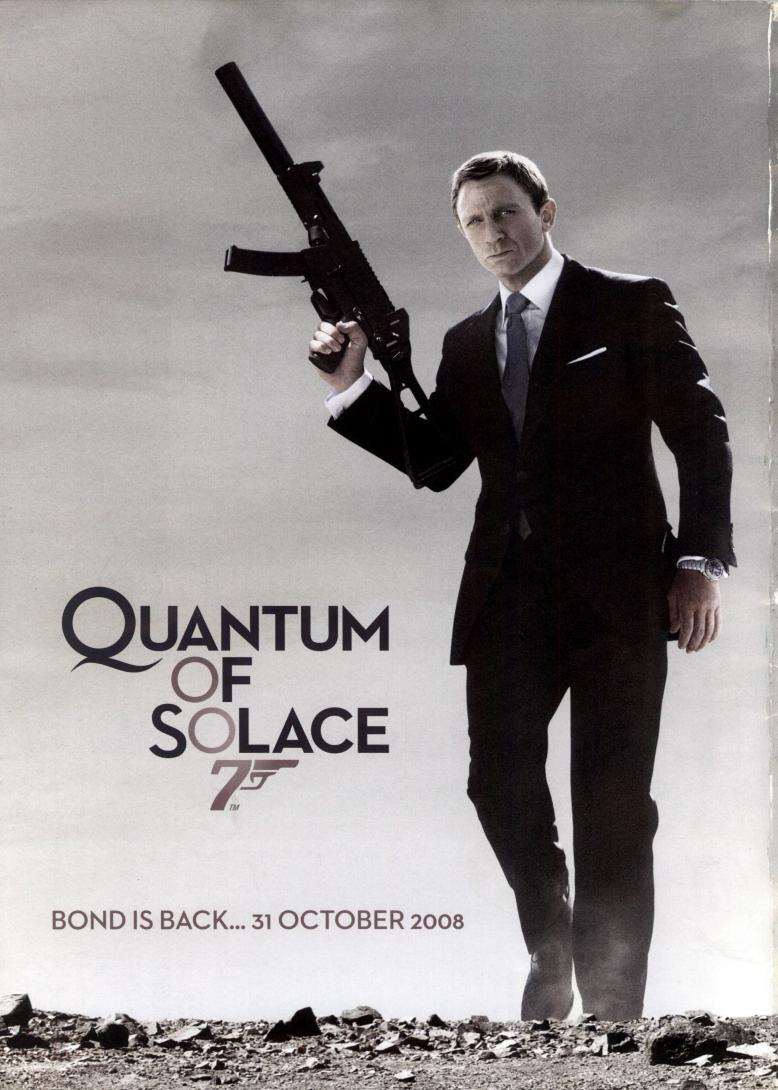


esistance 2

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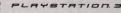
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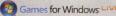
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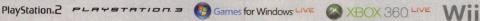




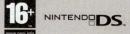


























PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Welcome



To borrow from a better man, this really *is* the life of kings. So we

thought, even as the games piled up awaiting the review scalpel, our eyes increasingly bleary from late-night discussions about scores. It has been, simply, the biggest month on PS3 so far.

Our exclusives alone are enough to have you applying for a Bank Of England bailout – Tomb Raider Underworld, Smackdown Vs Raw 2009, Endwar, the brilliant Mirror's Edge and, of course, this issue's cover game, the mighty Resistance 2. And that's before you factor in the likes of Far Cry 2, Dead Space and Bioshock. All of which are pretty much essential.

Sleep? Food? Love? These are for the weak. When we weren't reviewing, we were banging on Media Molecule's door, demanding their expert advice on creating LittleBigPlanet levels. Find out how to get your creations hearted every time starting on p68. Oh, and the bad news? Next month is looking just as monumental, with Prince Of Persia, Fallout 3, NFS: Undercover and Call Of Duty: World At War all inbound. Turns out the life of kings is quite tiring.

Tim Clark Editor

tim.clark@futurenet.com



RESISTANCE 2

Insomniac's shooter breaks America with beefier guns and XXXL bosses.

FEATURES



IN THE MOOD FOR...

From the Saleen S7 to the Ferrari F40, we buff up our favourite PlayStation motors of all time.



HOW TO BE A LITTLEBIGGENIUS

We visit Media Molecule – and refuse to leave until they show us how to make *everything*.



MIRROR'S EDGE

FPS redefined by coldly stylish free-running and the prettiest girl on PlayStation 3.

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BATMAN ASYLUM

It's Bats vs The Joker in Gotham's loony bin. "Alfred, there's lipstick on my gloves again."

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Next issue on sale 25 November



005

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Who we are...



Tim Clark Editor

The scarcity of meat in a lunchtime pasty put Tim in a mood not seen since the great PES crash of 2007.

Game of the moment The Thing



Ben Wilson

Deputy editor

Celebrated the Dolphins miracle win over the Patriots with a Gatorade bath. Final warning, now.

Game of the moment Pain Amusement Park Favourite alien Toy Story Green Men



Leon Hurley Commissioning

editor

Too much Far Cry 2 means Leon now wants his salary paid in uncut diamonds. Game of the moment

Favourite alien Ford Prefect



Rachel Weber genda editor

Made everyone in the LBP shop feel awkward by hugging the giant sackboy for just a little too long.

Game of the moment LittleBigPlanet Favourite alien Marvin The Martian



Nathan Ditum Reviews editor

Phoned in sick with what he said was a mutagenic virus. This just days after noting never get ill'. Hmmm..

Game of the moment Resistance 2



Helen Woodey Operations editor

A huge fire in Bath demonstrated Helen's excellent self preservation skills. We gawped, she ran.

Game of the moment Guitar Hero: World Tour Favourite alien

Write to the team at opm@futurenet.co.uk

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I've been toiling hard deep in the Blu-ray mines this month, and I've managed to dig up a colossal 29 demos for your gaming pleasure. I've packed in seven shiny new games, together with the prettiest gems from the

OPM archives. Pick up your racket and have a swing at tennis sim Top Spin 3, fight your way to glory with Naruto: Ultimate

Ninja Storm and then prove you've got what it takes to rule the world with Sid Meier's Civilisation Revolution. We've also brought you the best of the PSN Store, with Pixeljunk: Eden, Crash Commando, 1942: Joint Strike and the brain-mangling puzzler Echochrome. Rachel Weber Agenda editor





Top Spin 3

Fancy yourself as a Centre Court ace but can't afford the train fare to Wimbledon? Then try PS3's most realistic tennis sim yet. Play it safe from the baseline or go for glory with a risky passing shot, with 20 star names on offer – including Rafa Nadal, who's rippling guns are exclusive to PS3.

This month's exclusive highlights...



1942: Joint Strike

Earn your wings as a top WW2 fighter pilot with this classic scrolling shooter. Use bombs, bullets and acrobatics to obliterate the Nazis



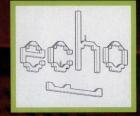
Pixeljunk Eden

How does a garden grow? With a quirky control system and some particularly addictive seedcollecting, apparently



Civilisation Revolution

Expand your city into a global empire with culture, science and heavy-handed use of nuclear weaponry.



Switch your p53 on, find the Galle

Echochrome

Prepare your brain for a workout You only need to get from A to B, but you'll have to solve some brutal perspective-based puzzles to do it.



What if my disc doesn't work?
If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to Disc Returns, DPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.
co.uk. Please put 'Disc' in the subject line.

Also on the disc this month Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm, Crash Commando, Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit, Battlefield: Bad Company, Enemy Territory: Quake Wars, Haze, Race Driver Grid, Guitar Hero Aerosmith, Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy, Overlord Raising Hell, Lost Planet, UEFA Euro 2008, Sega Superstars Tennis, Blast Factor, Burnout Paradis Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction, Skate, Sega Rally, Pro Evolution Soccer 2008, Stuntman: Ignition, Super Rub 'A' Dub, Folklore, Devil May Cry 4.

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The Big 10



Our fave LBP level Sackboy vs Colossus: ace. Page 16



Price is right Insomniac boss on PSN. Page 18



Return to PSP? Ready At Dawn's future plans.

▶ Page 19

Wesker's back Plus more new

info on Resi 5.

▶ Page 20

Sackboy store

We pay a visit to the LBP pop-up shop in Manchester.







1 Sony's

White Knight Chronicles lays down gauntlet to Final Fantasy

The first time you see White Knight Chronicles' boyish hero, Leonard, transform into the towering, eponymous warrior of Level-5's epic new adventure, it's clear that this is no makeweight RPG. Echoing countless man/machine hook-ups in everything from Armored Core to Appleseed, Leonard's fusion with the magical armour is infinitely more mech than medieval. And it's this willingness to shake up convention while delivering on the fantasy eye candy that defines White Knight Chronicles.

Take the intriguing MMO mode,

announced at the recent Tokyo
Game Show. The game first tasks you
with creating and customising a
unique character from a heaving
treasure chest of options. Where
WKC strays off the beaten path is by
making this freshly minted avatar an
integral part of both the off and online
games, seamlessly blending the two.
In the main game your creation
becomes a full member of Leonard's
party as he fights to save the princess
he failed to protect (see 'Once upon a
time...'). Online, the same avatar
becomes your playable character



great White hope

in a series of four-player quests in which the key to success is forming a party with the right balance of skills. And while these standalone multiplayer quests are more Monster Hunter than World Of Warcraft in scope and vibe, the best bit is that any perks, XP, weapons or items won by your character will move with them as they switch between the nets and solo play.

Choice cuts

This flexibility also extends to the combat system, with palettes of up to seven attacking moves that can be customised for each member of the party. Cleverly, multiple palette 'mixes' of attacking moves can then

be saved, enabling you to create bespoke combo sets. As Level-5's president Akihiro Hino told us, "The customisable battle system will enable the player to easily select their own style and tactics as they can freely combine commands.

Visually it seems that Level-5 whose credits include the astoundingly good Dragon's Quest VIII on PS2 - is more than happy to take



Dev talk

"In Japan there are lots of tales where the main character transforms into a superhero. I wondered. in a fantasy world? President, Level-5

on current king of the blockbuster RPG, Final Fantasy. Featuring lavish fantasy/steampunk art design, a city on the back of a gigantic turtle-like beast and a cast of thousands, FFXIII is going to have to go some way to eclipse what we've seen so far of White Knight Chronicles. Predictably, Akihiro Hino agrees: "It's the biggest title in terms of size out of anything Level-5 has worked on. The story is vast, and every aspect of it took great deals of time to complete. However, the end result is going to be such an epic product that one could almost think it impossible to make anything bigger in the future."

Once upon

white Knight Chronicles is set in the Kingdom of Balandor. It kicks off with a mysterious group called The Wizard violently gate-crashing the coming-of-age ceremony of Princess Cisna in order to kidnap her. The game's young protagonist, Leonard, intervenes and leads the Princess to safety through the bowels of the castle where they stumble across a suit of armour. By wearing the White Knight's armour, Leonard is armour, Leonard is transformed into a massive warrior and repels The Wizard.









Fake PES kits on the net

Insider talks to OPM about illegal option files

Seabass speaks

reason PES 2008 reatured a limited edit mode on PS3 was because Konami feared EA taking action regarding user-created kits, but PES creator Shingo Seabass he explains. "Last year we couldn't implement it because of lack of time.

The editing and sharing of Pro Evolution Soccer option files - which enable players to update the game with unlicensed teams – has become an increasingly common, and controversial, practice since it began on PS2. The tools in the game can of course be used legitimately - to create your pub or school team, for example - but a simple Google search reveals a bustling trade in files containing hooky strips for clubs that aren't officially licensed in PES 2009. Three years ago the Premier League acted to remove option files from fan sites and forums due to breach of copyright, but with file-swapping relatively simple on PS3, the issue looks set to flare up again.

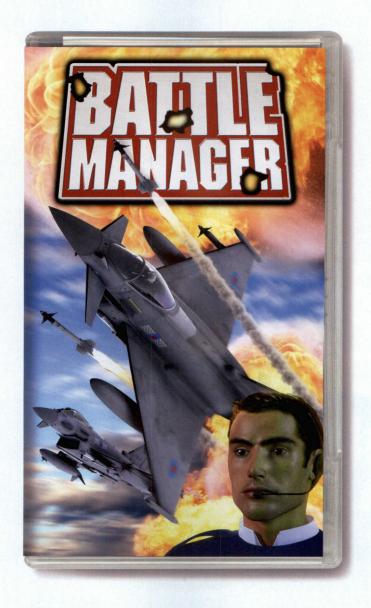
So who's creating these files and aren't they worried about getting caught? We spoke to one experienced editor who works with two other forum users to add unlicensed sides

to the game. "Work began on the new PES long before the game was out," he tells OPM. "We put together a database of the 2008/09 squads with their numbers and stat changes so that we're ahead of the game, so to speak. I usually pre-order on the internet. First day I play a few matches to see how the game looks, then sort out unlicensed team and player names - they really annoy me! I tend to finish editing a team then play a match to see if everything is correct. I've been known to spend eight to ten hours a day editing.'

Replica kits

The hobby can be a thankless one, though. Forum users will complain about a pedantic detail like a player's boots being incorrect, ignoring the thousands of other changes. Some even steal the file for financial gain. "We do this as a hobby and give it out for free," explains our source. "But there are those who try to profit from our work. I saw one guy selling our file for £3 and he'd sold loads. Very frustrating." And completely illegal. So does he fear a knock on the door from the Premier League, or flashing blue lights outside? Apparently not. "No one has ever contacted me - the option files are so widespread these days that it's commonplace and the companies accept it." That view may be naive, though. A spokesman for the Premier League told us: "We take all matters of copyright infringement very seriously." Although he declined to comment on specific games, given the fact EA spends a huge amount to secure exclusive rights to the Premier League for its FIFA series, it's unlikely this illicit trade will be allowed to go unchecked for long.

Do you download 'fixed' option files? Worried about getting caught? Tell us at opm@futurenet.com.



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3 LBP does Colossus!

Ico sequel recreated for sackboy play

The LittleBigPlanet beta has consumed our lives over the past few weeks. It was pandemonium, with people begging, borrowing and buying codes to get a sneak peak at Media Molecule's creative platformer.

The initial beta only contained three pre-made levels but the real fun was seeing what other people were creating. Our favourite level of all was the Shadow Of The Colossus effort shown here, appropriately titled Little Big Colossus.

It's the work of user Danielsan88 and had already been hearted 985 times within a week of going live. You even get to recreate the climactic moment where Agro goes to the big knacker's yard in the sky. Watch it in action at snipurl.com/47gip.

Check out our LittleBigPlanet feature starting or page 68 to see more of the best from the beta.

A CAROLET



Game Of The Year '08

Voting is open and we need your top three titles

If you judge awards by the quality of previous winners then the OPM Game Of The Year trophy is almost certainly the most prestigious in the world. Why? Because to date there's only been one winner, and that winner was Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare. Difficult act to follow? Yes – but then again with the likes of MGS4: Guns Of The Patriots, GTA IV and LittleBigPlanet tussling for the 2008 title, maybe not.

Our survey says...

Basically, it's shaping up to be a keenly fought contest, and the really exciting bit is that you get to decide who walks away with the big prize. This year we've expanded the competition to include not just PS3 but also PSP and PSN categories. What we need you to do is email us your top three games in each category, with a passionate 30-word explanation of your choices. Reckon FIFA 09 is the best PS3 has to offer? Tell us why. Think that Siren: Blood Curse is the greatest thing to ever happen to PSN? Drop us a line. Maybe you're making a case for Turok as the best shooter of the year? Get out.

Please send all your votes to opm@futurenet.com with the subject line 'GOTY Awards' (otherwise they can't be counted). The closing date for registering your choices in each category is 31 December 2008, and the results will be published in issue 27 of OPM, which is due out on 20 January 2009. Happy voting.





Chains Of Olympus developer considers comeback



Shiny past

French-born programmer Didier Malenfant has lived in Southern California since 1996, working for companies including Shirry Entertainment, Interplay, and most recently Naughty Dog, where heworked on the Jak And Daxter series before leaving to co-fount Ready At Dawn studios in 2003.

On 9 June, Ready At Dawn posted an image of its PSP development kits stacked up waiting to be collected by Sony. The accompanying message read: "We're now officially done with PSP development." It was a hugely depressing moment, given that the studio had created two of the format's best games – Daxter and God Of War: Chains Of Olympus. And it was also a worrying sign of the times.

More recently, Sony's president of Worldwide Studios, Shuhei Yoshida, admitted that the drop off in third-party support on PSP was "really, really disappointing" – a surprisingly stark admission that things aren't quite right on the good ship Portable. But, as we discovered, Ready At

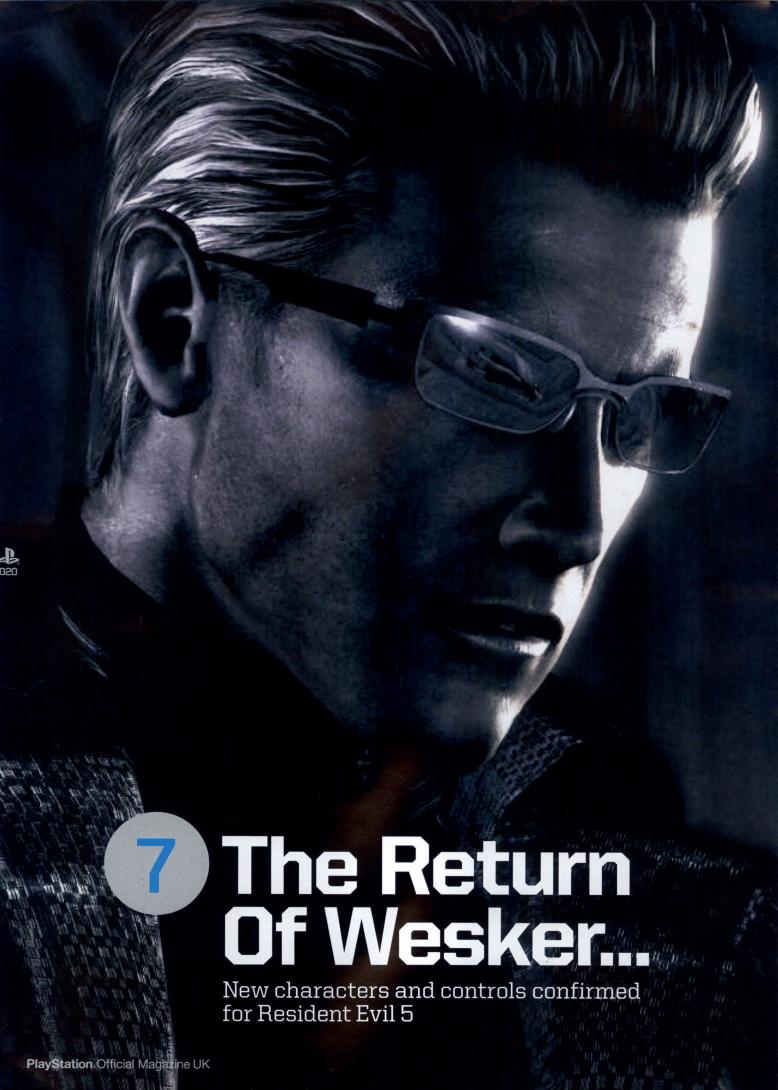
Dawn's announcement may not be so final. We spoke to studio president Didier Malenfant, who says that after receiving a huge amount of feedback the company may "reconsider this decision in the future".

New dawn

We also asked him why other teams haven't hit the sweet spot on the system so far? "I think it is very important to design with the platform in mind, but to be careful not to do it in a negative way," he says. "We all heard so many people complain about platforms being too hard, too this, too that. It's something we just don't understand here at Ready At Dawn. We look at all platforms like cool new

toys we can play with." And Malenfant believes there's more to come from the PSP hardware too. "The second iteration of our engine which we developed for Chains Of Olympus probably uses 80% of what the system is capable of putting out," he reveals. "There's still some untapped power in there, it's just a matter of finding a game that requires it." As for what Ready At Dawn's next project will be, or what format it will be on, he's more coy. "We have multiple stuff in the pipeline, some of it is original, some of it is based on existing IPs. We say: bet the kids on it being a brand new PS3 game.

Tell us what you think about the current state of PSP play at opm@futurenet.com.



The Big 10 Stories everyone's talking about

Evil empire

Ever wondered how many men, women and zombie dogs it takes to make a next-gen blockbuster? Well according to Capcom there are more than 400 brave souls working on Resident Evil 5. Expensive stuff then, but given that the publisher expects to sell three million copies of the game, it should be enough to keep the company in mixed herbs for a long time to come.

Whisper it, but we were starting to get a bit worried about Resident Evil 5. Without the influence of series' creator Shinji Mikami, who left Capcom in 2006, there was a growing sense that the new game might just be a play-safe retread of Resi 4. More sunshine, same scares. Not any more, though. Thanks to the latest info to emerge from Capcom's vaults, and our recent playtest at the Tokyo Games Show, we couldn't be hotter for Resident Evil's African adventure.

First the facts. Ruining Chris Redfield's safari will be Albert Wesker, the pantomime villain in sunglasses who's been manipulating events since the original game. Wesker's CV includes stints as the commander of STARS Alpha Team (the goodies, who he betrayed mwa ha!) and research work for the sinister Umbrella Corporation (benefits include free childcare and a lifetime supply of enormous spider bio-weapons). Having helped destroy Umbrella, these days Wesker is on the payroll of another secret organisation seemingly dedicated to taking over the world one zombie epidemic at a time.

Who's who

Wesker is joined on Team Evil by two new characters. Excella Gione is a typically buxom creation hewn from the fever dreams of Capcom's artists. Her silk chiffon dress might say 'impossibly expensive call girl', but she's actually CEO of a pharmaceutical firm, and presumably keen to get her hands on the mutagenic T-virus. Working for her is a hooded, but apparently also female, character whose face is hidden by a beaked mask left over from the Eyes Wide Shut orgy scene. Our guess is that she's a returning character, with Ada Wong looking most likely, but Jill Valentine or Chris' sister Claire operating undercover could be an outside bet.

In terms of gameplay, the big news is the optional new control system.

It's heavily influenced by Xbox 360's Gears Of War in the sense that the left stick enables you to strafe sideways, while 📭 aims and 📭 to fires - giving the game more of a shooter feel. You still won't be able to move and fire at the same time, because Capcom wants to maintain the series' sense of panic. Based on what we've seen, the game is peppered with the flashy set-pieces that were so popular last time out. From speeding through the African bush on a flatbed truck while fighting infected riding dirt bikes to taking on an enormous boss made of writhing black tendrils, Resi 5 looks like delivering on its malevolent potential when it arrives on 13 March. We'll have a full hands-on report in the next issue Wesker **Excella** 'Mystery'





GPlanet



Step into the LittleBigPlanet pop-up shop and instead of cash registers and for sale signs you'll find PS3s, paper glue and a giant sackboy. Opened in Manchester to introduce the world to Sony's brilliant homebrew platformer, it's a place where anyone can play the game, design their own sackboy and even attend lessons on using LBP's tools. And 'business' is clearly good. When we visited the place was packed.

At one of the PS3s we found Kate Forrest creating a Manchesterthemed level. She's been trained as a 'super user' on the game, and when she's not building replicas of Old Trafford out of blocks and stickers she's giving tutorials to anyone who asks. The level was still a work in progress, but it already featured a miniature Noel Gallagher, a museum, a Hilton hotel and a Man City fan trapped in a cage.

Play time

Everywhere you look there's something to do. Each week a local artist comes in and draws a giant LittleBigPlanet scene, and over the following seven days people can colour it in and embellish it with fat marker pens. On the opposite side of the shop is the 'share wall', decorated

with hundreds of sackboy designs and photos of people proudly displaying their creations. The best of these win an LBP T-shirt. Out back it looks like a Blue Peter presenter has exploded, with cardboard, wool, egg boxes and home-made rockets everywhere – evidence of the staff's weekly craft projects hosted to keep visitors busy. It's like playgroup for adults.

Fancy building your own sackboy out of bog rolls and cotton wool? By the time you read this the LBP shop will have relocated to London where it will stay until 17 November.

You'll find the LBP shop at Units 1 & 23, Thomas Neal's Centre, Covent Garden, London, WC2.





PS3 at TGS

Must-know info direct from the Tokyo Game Show



LittleBigPlanet

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Sony

LBP has teamed up with the makers of Metal Gear Solid 4 and Final Fantasy to make Snake and Sephiroth sackboys for you play with. The race is now on to recreate Snake's MGS4 mech showdown with Liquid.



Quantum Theory

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Tecm

Third-person shooter, exclusive to PS3, in which gun-toting hero Sid takes on hulking sci-fi enemies alongside sword-wielding gal sidekick Filena. No word on co-op, but we're hopeful. Seriously though... Sid?



Patapon 2

Format PSP ETA 2009 Pub Sony

The sequel to PSP's supremely addictive rhythmic puzzler enables you to customise your eyeball warriors with items you hatch from eggs – such as masks that add speed.

Brilliantly, it also supports four-player co-op.





Dress

Format PSN ETA 2009 Pub Sony

Credit crunch mean you're walking round in rags? Don't fret – just stay indoors and kit out a perfectly chiselled avatar in expensive labels instead. Puma is the first brand to sign up to this virtual makeover app.



inFamous

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Sony

Our time with Sucker Punch's Heroes-style sandbox game saw hero Cole using a psychic ability to 'read' a corpse to learn how it died. This revealed a ghostly trail showing where the murderer had been. Very cool.



Street Fighter IV

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Capcom

Four characters from past Street Fighters have been confirmed exclusively for console SFIV: Fei Long and Cammy (both Super SFII); Dan (SF Alpha), and Sakura (SF Alpha 2). Arcade boss Seth will also be playable.



Demon's Souls

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Sony

Very old-fashioned and basic hack-slashrepeat action RPG. Customise a character and then battle through a castle, killing zombies. Armour and weapons have an uninspiring grey Middle Ages feel to them.



Tekken 6 Bloodline Rebellion

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Namco Banda

Console spin-off of the renowned fighter that's been wowing Japanese arcaders since last November. Two new characters (Alisa and Lars) plus extra stages and customisation options are promised.



Bayonetta

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Sega

In a word: amazing. With insanely OTT bosses, epic levels – falling through a universe on fragments of a broken clock (!) – and the eponymous witch killing foes with her hair, this makes DMC look restrained.



OPM princes debate POP's makeover



Says royal optimist and thick black line lover, Steve Williams

Cel-shading – like electric cars, low alcohol lager and bigamy – is occasionally hyped as the next big thing, yet never seems to catch on. And while I'm in danger of simply sounding contrary (oh no I'm not), I've never liked either POP or cel-shading. But I love the look of the new game.

That's right, suck it up – Persia isn't actually that good, if you ask me, which you didn't. I pretended you did and said it anyway. I tried so hard to like it on PS2 (loved the look, the athletic flow, the deadly puzzles), but every time, the combat stopped me. Respawning enemies, endless blocking, taking damage while on the floor with no control... it may have been dry and dusty, but it still sucked. And the pathetic nu-metal, teen-angst goth makeover of Warrior Within was embarrassing like getting caught in mother's dressing up box.

Altair ego

What's really contrary is that lenjoyed Assassin's Creed – also from Ubisoft's Montreal studio, and in the same spirit. Look at the critical reception, however, and Persia is far more highly thought of. Why? Everybody is wrong and I'm right. It seems so obvious when I say it like that. POP combines a series I've never liked with a look I've never cared for – and, therefore, totally grabs my interest. Persia needs a change. Cel-shading needs a new poster boy. It's a marriage made in heaven. Or, at least, Canada.

Like the free-running royal's new look? Tell us why



Says our own amateur art expert and slave to photo-realism, Nathan Ditum

I blame you – YOU – for not buying Sands Of Time. What were you thinking? The scores were big, it was beautifully designed and daringly didn't star a meaty lug with a gun. You didn't buy it, though, did you? And thanks to you the Prince went to his bedroom and listened to My Chemical Romance for two games in some weird emergency emo makeover. Which didn't work either – obviously – and which in turn leads to us to this: another mad, faddish overhaul of a game that was fine in the first place.

Paint by numbers

So, to my problems with cel-shading. It's pretend 3D, which I hate. Or in Persia's case it might be real 3D made to look like 2D with fat crayon outlines around everything, which, if anything, is even worse. The whole thing runs counter to the point of graphics, which is that they get better and more sophisticated the more preposterously expensive the machines running them are. Unlike the new Persia, which looks like when my children make insane collages from bits of magazine cut out with plastic scissors - Kerry Katona riding a screaming Rio Ferdinand into battle against a giant pair of shoes from the Guardian Weekend magazine's fashion spread. Except the collage has a greater sense of narrative direction. In summary: it looks childish and stupid and somehow pretend, and I wish it would go away.

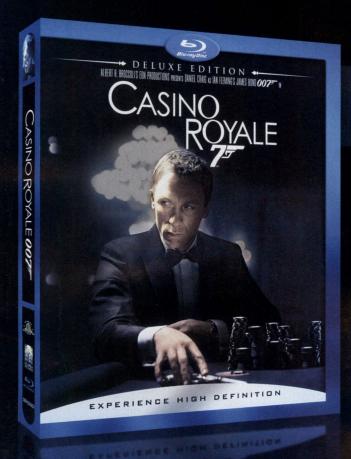
Think our Princey needs a trip to Harrods? Email us at opm@futurenet.com.

BLU-RAY" WAS MADE FOR BOND



CRYSTAL CLEAR DIGITAL SOUND

ADVANCED INTERACTIVITY & BONUS FEATURES



ALL NEW 2 DISC DELUXE EDITION INCLUDES HOURS OF NEW SPECIAL FEATURES, COLLECTOR'S BOOKLET AND EXCLUSIVE BLU-RAY MATERIAL

- BONUS VIEW PICTURE-IN-PICTURE VISUAL COMMENTARY WITH DIRECTOR & PRODUCER.
- KNOW YOUR DOUBLE O: THE ULTIMATE JAMES BOND TRIVIA QUIZ.



SINGLE DISC EDITION ALSO AVAILABLE

High Definition



Blu-ray Disc













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CASINO YALE





ON Solution 20 TH OCT AT hmv.com

Informer

Agenda

PlayStation news, views, happenings and people...

28 Informer

Hot game issues investigated by OPM's crack team.

30 Culture

The PlayStation people who make gaming great.

32 Personal

Hot opinion from those in the know.

33 Tech Shiny things you

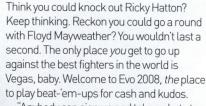
can't live without.

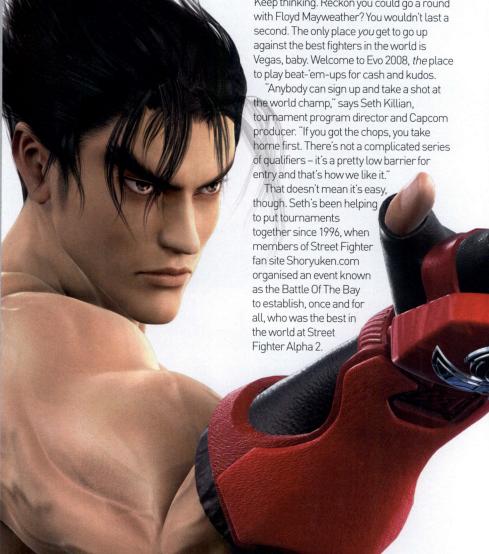
34) Sony Hard PlayStation facts fished out of the sea of doubt.

36 Events Your gamer's guide to the month ahead.

Fight fans play for big stakes

Want to take on the world's top fighters without risking a broken nose? Get yourself to Evo 2008...





Training tips

Advice from the champions



"Study your bracket in the tournament and keep track of potential opponents. Then go find them and try to observe their play style, favourite tactics/tricks, etc. Hopefully you will pick up something that will give you the edge to defeat them."

John Choi First in the Street Fighter II Turbo tournament



"I would say they should really think about how they can make their style unique and different from anyone else's. Put a lot of practice and effort in, try to be as original as possible, be creative, be determined, stay focused and it will bannen."

Ryan Hart First in the Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection tournament



"I always say pick a very defensive character to start out with because its the best way to learn the basics of the game. For example, if you were learning Street Fighter III 3rd Strike, you would want to pick Chun Li – she is easy, defensive, and is all about the basics."

Justin Wong First in the Marvel Vs Capcom 2 tournament

Less than 100 people turned up, but even then the skill level was insane, with soon-to-bebitter foes Alex Valle and John Choi clashing in the finals before Valle came out on top. From there, Japanese players started competing – and dominating – in the Capcom games, as tournaments expanded to feature Tekken and Soulcalibur. The first official Evo was held in 2002, but the competition exploded in 2004, when a video of Japan's Daigo 'The Beast' Umehara parrying an incredible 15 hits in a

row from teen prodigy Justin Wong on Street Fighter III hit the internet and drove fight fans crazy. Now,

> thousands of people descend on the event every year. Most of them compete at a higher level than any fighting you've ever played – and they still get smashed by the champs.

You're the best

Some 2008 events were predictable. Justin Wong – who first entered Evo at the age of 16, and has won the Marvel Vs Capcom 2 title every year since – dominated again, prompting some pundits to question if he can

be beaten. "He shows you how far someone can go," says rival Dogface. "Ask yourself: how far could someone go playing Street Fighter?' If you played every day of your life, and were totally hardcore... How far is it possible? Your answer is Justin Wong." The UK's own Ryan Hart took the Tekken crown despite a stomach infection, but the field was fairly lacklustre - many players are already concentrating on Tekken 6 and didn't bother turning up. One surprise of the tournament was the SF IV invitational. Hundreds queued up to play, but the new characters did best, with relative newcomer Kindevu steering Abel to victory with a Wong-controlled Rufus (he's the fat one) coming in second.

The big news was Ryan Hart's 'money match' against JR Rodriguez on SF: Third Strike. With a cash pot rumoured to be in triple figures, the match went to a nail-biting five-four, with the American Akuma player taking top honours. Another money match between a pair of relative newcomers to the scene saw spectators betting a couple of grand on one of the most-watched matches in tournament history. "I won't say it's gotten more bloodthirsty, exactly," says Seth, "but rivalries spring up every year. Pound for pound, these guys are like nothing else."





Hundreds of gamers gather to watch the big names compete in the top tier matches.

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

After the
success of
Guitar Hero:
Aerosmith,
Metallica and
Hendrix games
are in the
works



MAG (it stands for massive action game), Sony's new 256-strong shooter, may end up charging a subscription to play.



Expect a Fallout
MMO announcement
soon. Interplay has
launched a website
for its new project
V13. Vault 13
perhaps?

Surprisingly, IO's so-so Kane & Lynch will get a sequel next year.

Get ready to return to Liberty City. A list of GTA IV Trophies has been leaked online, suggesting a patch is in the works.



Fun but flawed dino shooter Turok has dodged extinction and is going to get a seguel.

A leaked perk list for Call Of Duty: World At War reveals new vehicle bonuses including a Coaxial Machine Gun.





Start with a large plastic bin then...



... carefully cut out sackboy's mouth.



Use bubble wrap to bulk out his head.



Then cover it with your fabric of choice...



. Kemeny used an XXL grey tracksuit top.



Masking tape and glue help make it neat.



Once happy, remove the tracksuit arms.



Now a circle of fabric for sackboy's scalp.



You could also make cardboard specs.



Pad everything with bags of packing beads. Position eyes and cut out of black leather.





Add LEDs to the eyes for extra 'impact'.

Little big outfit

How to turn yourself into a 'real' sackboy

If you made it to Bestival on the Isle of Wight this year you might just have glimpsed a life-sized LittleBigPlanet sackboy amidst the crowd of cider-gargling indie kids. The man behind the giant fabric face was Adam Kemeny, a web designer from Brighton, who decided to make his own LBP-inspired costume.

"I needed an outfit for Bestival and it suddenly struck me as a fun thing to make," explained Kemeny. He created the outfit using a load of different materials, from industrial bubble wrap to an old plastic bin, and hit up Primark for the grey tracksuit body. "I'd decided to wear two pairs of tops and bottoms to soften my body shape up, but this made it insanely hot in the dance tents."

It was all worth it, though, when he was spotted by members of Sony's marketing team, who promised him a PS3 and a copy of the game. Check out the step-by-step instructions above if you fancy making your own life-sized sackboy costume, and let us know how you get on. Check out makeasackboy.com for pics of Kemeny's sackboy at Bestival, too.



Film star

Finishing PS3 games so you don't have to...



Want to see how Haze turns out but can't be bothered to slaughter your way though hundreds of meathead Mantel troopers? Head to Boner Jones' website and you'll find links to his run-through of the entire game, split into neat chapters. To date he's finished Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Manhunt 2 and Resistance: Fall Of Man.

Jones' real name is Andy Evans (he chose the Boner alias because it makes him "giggle"), and he's a video editor based in Florida. He decided to use his digital skills after spotting run-throughs of retro games on Youtube.

"I thought, hell, I could do this!" he told us. Armed with a TV tuner he started off by uploading missions from GTA. "It took off better than I ever expected... it wasn't my intention to start a website or anything."

"I edit the hell out of my videos," he admits. He cuts out load times, enhances the visuals and even adds sound bites for comedy. "I think my lack of perfection is what has made my run-throughs more popular than others." Evans is currently playing through Mercs 2 and GTA: Liberty City Stories – visit bonersgames.com to see how he gets on.

■ Evans has just finished Mercs 2. His girlfriend thinks his status as an internet celeb is "awesome".

WHO SAID THAT? V.I.P. quotes

"He needs to put the clamps on!" Bionic Commander producer **Ben Judd** disses Mr Kojima's cut-scenes.

"I don't look at Brett Ratner and say 'we're going to have a s**t movie." **David Jaffe** on God Of War's film.

"It's like wartime."
Resi 5 producer
Masachika
Kawata
on making
a horror epic.

"In the future, we see full MMOs that are designed for PSP." Sony Online Ent. head **John Smedley** has big plans.

OPM HOT TOPIC

Can online forums really make or break games?





Rich Lemarchand Lead designer, Naughty Dog

"Any kind of word of mouth, whether it's forums, online networking or old-fashioned talking to your mates, is hugely important for a game's success."



Randy Pitchford
President,

"Our forum people are the best in the industry. These guys affect us with their ideas and feedback, and they also help tell people what we're doing. They're great people and mean a lot to us!"



Jason Avent
Game director,
Black Bock Studios

"You're only talking about a relatively small amount of people. So although they're influential, I don't think they have the power to break a game."



Jacob Minkoff Lead designer, Blue Omega Entertainmen

"It depends on your marketing budget. If you have a zillion dollars to spend on raising mass-market awareness, then the impact of forums is, likely, negligible."





Sacked off

Tim Clark on why no one seems to heart his LittleBigPlanet level

Did you have a go on My Red Hot Ballz? I hope you were gentle. A lot of love went into those burning balls, which formed my contribution to the LittleBigPlanet beta trial. It was a crazy time: a frantic moon grab with players rushing online to post their levels. I spent two nights slaving in the Create mode, staying up into the small hours with only Radio Five Live's coverage of the global banking apocalypse for company. I stopped answering the phone and began planning meals

based around stuff that could be cooked in the least time. (Omelette? *Again*?) And when it finally came time to push 'publish' I was overwhelmed by emotion. This, I thought, is how new fathers must feel. Proud. Nervous. Slightly eggy.

For those of you who haven't played My Red Hot Ballz, try to imagine Sonic's Green Hill Zone as remodelled by a child wearing knight's gauntlets. Given my ineptitude with anything mechanical, I decided to ignore complex vehicles and concentrate

'genius'. As I saw it there were four problems with the level. 1) I'd forgotten to include the scoreboard thingy, which meant you couldn't actually finish it. That's what you get for skipping tutorials. 2) I hadn't noticed how hard the level was because I always knew what hazard came next, whereas other users were getting frustrated by having their bottoms burned. 3) Despite the testing there was still one place you could fall behind the scenery. Blerg! 4) It was too predictable. When



"Imagine Sonic's Green Hill Zone as remodelled by a child in knight's gauntlets."

on reliable platforming elements – swings, jumps, spikes and hot rocks that fall from the sky to form burning pits. The problem with other platform-based levels I'd tried – or at least so I reasoned – was that they hadn't been thoroughly playtested. Some jumps were almost impossible, the flow was too stop/start and falling behind the scenery was a regular occurrence. The difference with mine, as I naively thought, was that it would be tweaked to perfection before publishing. Ha, bloody, ha.

In LittleBigPlanet players can 'tag' completed levels with a word they feel best describes the experience. The first ones stamped on My Red Hot Ballz were 'lousy' and 'boring'. This came as a shock, as I'd been hoping for 'staggering' and

I asked a colleague on our sister magazine Edge to try it, he replied, "As long as it's not full of fire hazards... everyone's doing that." Sigh.

Having fixed problems 1) and 3), My Red Hot Ballz was republished. The amazing thing, though, is that the brutal popping of my LBP cherry has only left me wanting more. Normally I reject criticism like cats reject cold baths, but I'm now obsessed with winning over the LBP community. The feeling you get when someone hearts' your level (which, admittedly, has only happened twice so far) is like nothing else on PS3. And I'm still having trouble sleeping thanks to the overspill of ideas from creation sessions. My next masterpiece is going to be an enormous icy slide. It will be called My Big Icy Tube.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE



Fun-loving Richard Stanton wants us all to get **Under The Skin**

When the baby alien burst out of John Hurt's chest. how great would it have been if it had tweaked his hooter? "Got your nose!" In extraterrestrial action game Under The Skin you're a blue alien in a nappy, sent to Earth purely to play pranks on humans. So you stuff probes where the sun don't shine, drop giant burgers on their heads or punch them with boxing gloves on springs, then run away laughing. It's a game built around winding up idiots. Idiots! Imagine being able to make life's walking irritants fart and sing karaoke, before pinching their clothes until they're so mad their heads go red and burst. Utterly coconuts, Under The Skin is what my daydreams are made of.





ELAC Micro Sub 2010

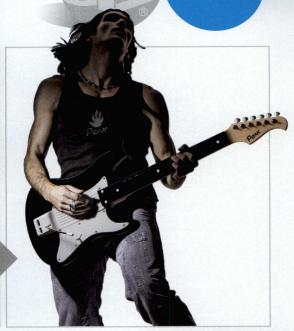
Offset the 'I'm so lonely' vibe of your minimalist hi-fi setup with this tiny subwoofer that's

ETBA

Starpex Guitar Controller

Take your rock star fantasing funts, not that one) to the next level with this fancy wooden Rock Band and Guitar Hero controller.

£97 go-peak.com



Philips Cinema One

MP3 and DVD player, plus six speakers into one tiny package, this is a miniature multi-tasker.

£390

expansys.com



Want

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

Microsoft Surface

Finally! A touch-sensitive coffee table that doubles as a family computer. Perfect for photos, disastrous for 'accidental'

ETBA

1

microsoft.com/surface



WowWee FemiSapien

Futuristic sexism with the lady robot who's a backup singer,

£51

amazon.com



Take the classy, rhinestone free approach to customising your iPod and send it to these guys for a Capcom-endorsed Street Fighter engraving.



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press





from £1,500 sonystyle.co.uk

In a nutshell

It's the tomorrow-tech laptop that's all about delivering pristine HD images. It's also the only notebook to deliver an 18.4" screen with 3LED backlighting for extra crispy picture quality and perfect colour reproduction. Designed for photographers and filmmakers it's a rather expensive way to edit your match.com profile pic, but should help turn your holiday video into a Kubrickian masterpiece of icy alienation. Yay.

What's so special?

The Vaio AW looks like the sort of laptop Darth Vader checks his Gmail on. To: Palpatine. Subject: Crushing rebel alliance. The screen uses the same tech as Sony's top-of-the-range Bravia LCD TVs, plus there's a Blu-ray drive and Dolby Home Theatre virtual surround sound to make the most of your legitimate HD movie collection.

Tell me more...

As well as its flashy screen the Vaio has plenty of grunt under the hood, with a Nvidia GeForce 9600M GT graphics card, Intel CoreTM2 Duo processors and a 640GB hard drive. There's an HDMI output for screening your mad videoediting skillz on an HDTV and a built-in sub-woofer should you need to show your meisterwerk while on the move. "Hang on... wait for it... Mittens is about to do the cutest thing."

Software

The AW comes with Adobe Photoshop Lightroom and Elements, both serious image editing tools that professional swear by.

Sony VAIO AW series

This black beauty is the latest in HD laptop technology



PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up **▼** Down **●** Non mover **+** New entry

PS3

- 1 + FIFA 09
- 2 Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway
- 3 V Star Wars The Force Unleashed
- 4 V Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 5 V Pure
- 6 A Grand Theft Auto IV
- 7 COD 4 Modern Warfare
- 8 W Mercenaries 2 WIF
- 9 A Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
- 10 Metal Gear Solid 4 Guns Of The Patriots

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 + FIFA 09
- 2 V Star Wars The Force Unleashed
- 3 V Lego Indiana Jones The Original Adventures
- 4 🔍 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 5 Mercenaries 2 WIF
- 6 ▼ Guitar Hero III LOR
- **7** ▼ Wall-E
- 8 V Kung Fu Panda
- 9 The Incredible Hulk
- 10 The Mummy: Tomb Of The Dragon Emperor

Source **chart-track.co.uk**

PSP

- 1 + FIFA 09
- 2 V Star Wars The Force Unleashed
- 3 Crisis Core FFVII
- 4 V Lego Indiana Jones The Original Adventures
- 5 V Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 6 God Of War COO
- **7** ▼ Wall-E
- 8 V Star Wars Battlefront RS
- 9 PDC World Champ Darts 08
- 10 ▼ Secret Agent Clank

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Never spend a moment unfulfilled with our monthly guide

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

OCT 27

Get your fill of zero-g Downfall on DVD – it's the manga movie tie-in survival horror game.

PlayStation

31

Quantum Of Solace zip lines into cinemas today, and we're giving away copies of Casino Royale Deluxe Edition on Blu-ray and an HDTV to celebrate.

NOV 01

Electric dreams
The Gamecity festiva
in Nottingham hosts
LittleBigPlanet
creators Media creators Media Molecule and C64 tribute band, Press Play On Tape.

Spot the twist

B

Guy's night
Use foiled regicide as an excuse to eat toffer apples and stand in a field gooth-ing at the pretty lights. "Can you san purt com/artir" snipurt.com/artir

05

Thursday

Hark back to a time when men were men, war was dirty and bananas were rationed with Band Of Brothers on Blu-ray.



Come for the rhymes and rhythms, stay for the meltdown rant, as Kanye West tries to into the 02 Arena.



She's back!



21





24

Make a hot fuss over The Killers – their new album, Day & Age, is in shops today.



Jam founder and ex-member of (blerg!) The Style Council, Paul Weller, plays at the Carling Academy in Brixton today.





Watch Casino Royale in HD

31 Oct Quantum Of Solace in cinemas

See 007 in action in glorious hi-def

It's a mega month for Bond. Not only is Quantum Of Solace out in cinemas, but the essential Casino Royale Deluxe Edition is available on Blu-ray and DVD from 20 October. And you could be watching it on a new HDTV, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. We're giving you the chance to win the Deluxe Edition Blu-ray and a 26" Sony Bravia HDTV. We've even got ten copies of the Blu-ray for runners up. Just answer the following question:

Ian Fleming's original novel, Casino Royale, was first published in...

A1999 B1978

Text using the word 'Casino' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name or address to 87474. Or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/25crcomp. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date 25.11.08

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Games to play when the boss isn't looking



Hungry Are The Dead

conscription to the army of taking pot shots at the walking rotters. Addictive, despite looking like it was drawn hastily in MS Paint. snipurl.com/3o8dp



Kebab Van

Forget Masterchef, real rotating spikes. Prove your business credentials snipurl.com/3art1

Shore Siege

Whoever said that the biggest danger from a life protect a beached pirate ship from marauding

snipurl.com/3grze



VEAR

This month we visit OPS2 #40

The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King, arriving on PS2 as its

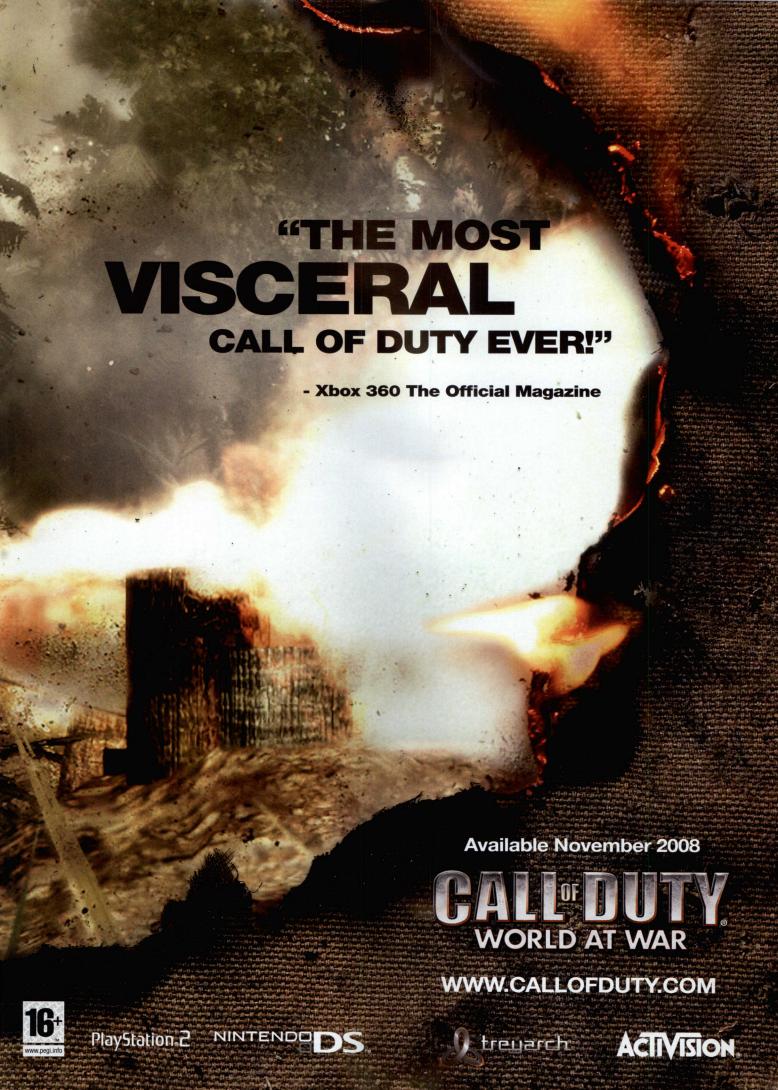
cueball assassin's return in Hitman: Contracts, with the game's producer announcing, slightly scarily, that the freedom than ever because 'who are Sony's new tease GT4: Prologue broke the news that Final Fantasy X-2

Tekken's Nina Williams was to get her own spin-off beat-'em-up Nina, which aptly named Death By Degrees.

WWE Smackdown! Here Comes The Pain, with its new Bra & Panties Match Manhunt ('the grossest violation of human rights on PS2'), and The Sims Bustin' Out (recommended especially community of computer folk').

packed with quality - 8/10s for FIFA 2004, Ghosthunter, XIII, Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time, Broken Sword, Beyond Good & Evil, Ratchet & Clank: Locked And Loaded, with SSX 3, WRC 3 and Tony Hawk's Underground all getting 9/10s. And













PLAYSTATION.3







KILLZONE 5

Massive weapons, Helghast, massive weapons, ISA, massive weapons, 32-way multiplayer. (Also, in case you were still wondering: massive, massive weapons.)

PlayStation Official Magazine - UK DETICE STATES

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

This month the Bat leads the way. Why? Because he's the coolest superhero going and long overdue a decent game – find out if we think Batman: Arkham Asylum will deliver over the page. The setup's perfect – Gotham's nuttiest crooks take over the madhouse, forcing the Dark Knight to take on almost all his biggest enemies – and it's certainly got the moody looks.

If you want something a little lighter then Prince Of Persia is showing off his flash new moves (p54) while FreeRealms and LocoRoco 2, both on page 48, reveal PS3's chirpier side. The former is especially interesting – a kid-friendly MMO that's free to play, with hours of quests, mini-games and expansion packs. And it needn't cost you a penny.

To wrap up there's the latest on the new Need For Speed (p46) and Skate 2 (p50), plus a complete breakdown of all the multiplayer classes for the gonna-behuge Killzone 2 (p52). For once it looks like the Medic won't be a waste of time.



BATMAN ARKHAM ASYLUM

It's 2008's 372nd DC-related videogame! But, but, buuuut... The good news is it also looks like being the best.



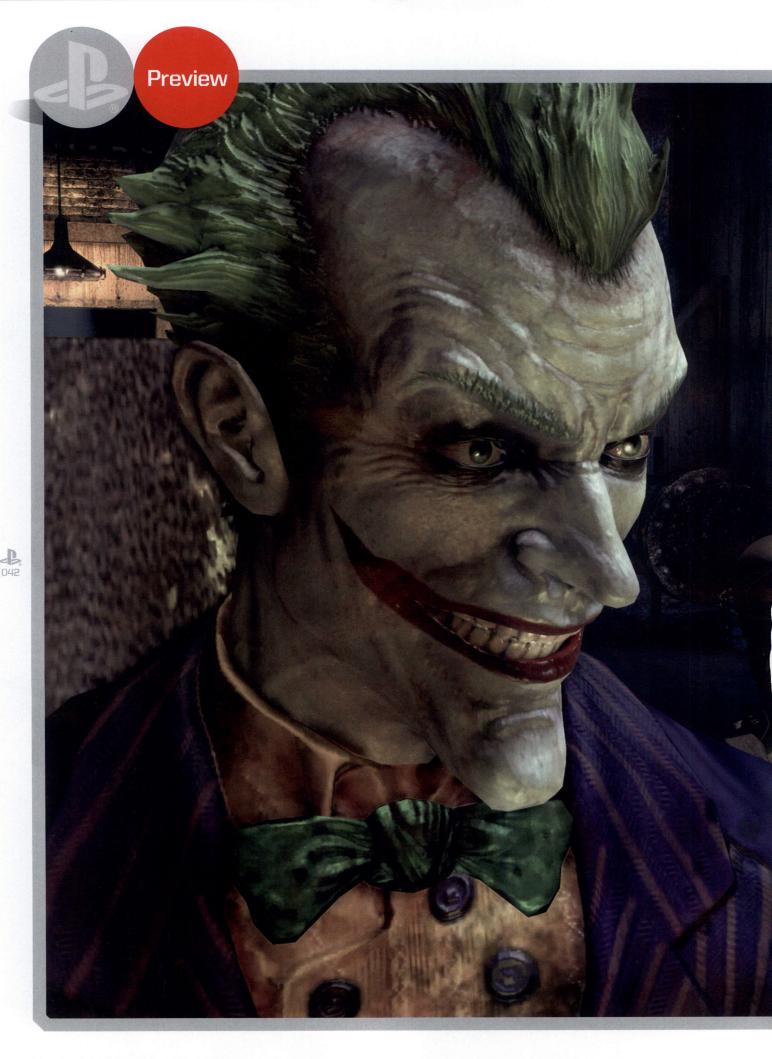
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERCOVER

Like Britney, NFS has ignored multiple calls to take early retirement and instead bounced back with a hot new vibe. Promise.

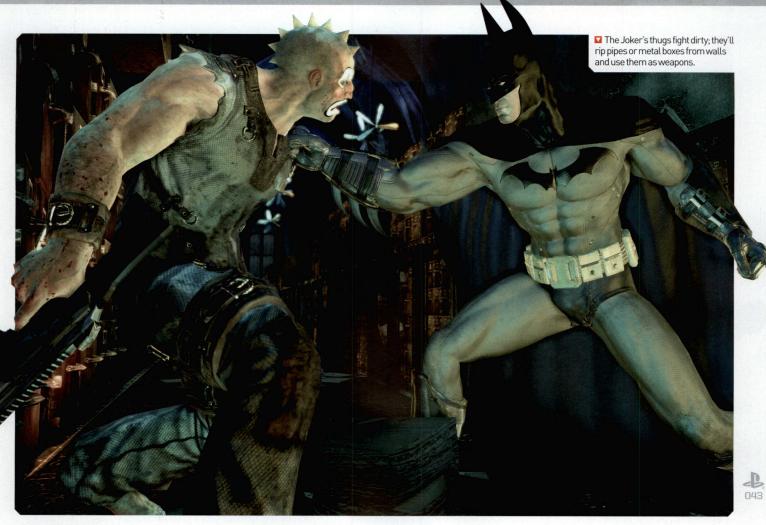


PRINCE OF PERSIA

His highness is now a) cel-shaded b) unkillable and c) a bit catalogue model. But is he d) still a gaming force? Read on and find out.









The hero
Batman
Moodily voiced by Kevir
Conroy from The



The villain The Joker Mark Hamill brings giggling menace to



The boss
James Gordon
Stoic cop, desperate but
unsure about relying on
a man dressed as a bat.

Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA Spring 2009 Pub Eidos Dev Rocksteady Studios

Batman Arkham Asylum

atman has always been about madness. The orphaned billionaire with a sociopathic lust for revenge; the weirdos, misfits and murderers who egg him on. And, at the heart of it all, is Arkham Asylum – Gotham's Grand Central for psychos – and the perfect setting for a game.

Welcome to hell

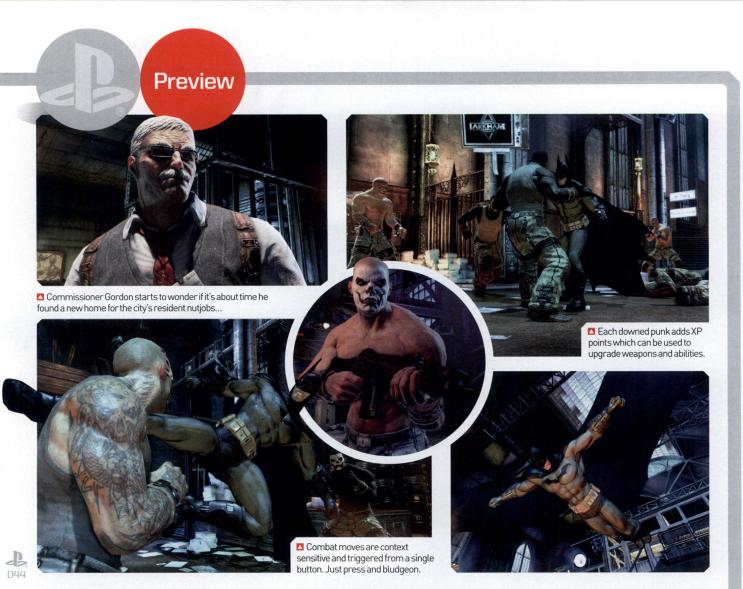
In the opening sequence, Batman delivers The Joker into the wary and suspicious arms of warden Quincy Sharp. On cue, The Joker escapes, dancing off into the blackness and opening hundreds of maximum security cells, plunging the facility into

chaos. And so the madness spreads.

Key to the game is a pared-down melee combat system. Batman's attacks are all on a single button, so the only thing to worry about is timing – each hit builds a combo meter, which wipes out when you punch air. You also have Batarangs and a swooshing cape – both of which stun enemies for long enough to finish the job with your fists.

The rooms are cavernous and multi-levelled, giving Batman ample sneaking opportunities. We encounter some goons keeping two guards tied up in a records office, jammed with towering filing cabinets. The bad guys are packing semi-automatics – taking

them all on at once isn't an option. Instead we use the bat rope to swing between gargoyles, silently stalking the group until one gets separated from the pack. We then swoop down with a special move. Our favourite is the hanging takedown where Batman descends upside down from a rope, grabs his victim, then ties him up, leaving him hanging for his mates to discover. It's all about scaring the bejesus out of Gotham's scum. Enemies have three emotional states ranging from ice cool to absolute terror - picking them off one by one is a good way to create fear. And when they're scared, they're easy prey.



But it's not all revenge fantasy violence. (Just the good bits.) There's also an Investigation mode, which provides an x-ray view of your surroundings, so you can spot hidden weapons and gather forensic evidence. At one point Batman has to analyse the office of a missing Doctor for clues. Investigation mode uncovers her fingerprint on a safe door and logs its on the computer so you can spot later prints she's made on stair banisters, walls or doors. Clever, but it will have to be tightly integrated with the action to avoid feeling like a CSI-style gimmick. We're not convinced.

In fact, there are several elements that feel played out. Batman can apply plastic explosives to 'weak' walls, revealing hidden chambers. He can also collect objects such as Joker spray cans and Two-Face coins to unlock rewards. Sigh. The puzzles we saw seemed familiar, too – there's a moment where Batman wanders into a room with a glass floor, beneath it is a chamber where The Joker has trapped two guards – you have two minutes to gain access before they're gassed. But, oh, what's that on the ceiling above the glass floor? An enormous metal chandelier suspended by a length of rope...

The good news? Characterisation is spot-on thanks to a script by DC's Paul Dini. Batman is his usual monosyllabic edifice, while The Joker is pitched between the giggling technicolour

goon of The Animated Series (which Dini wrote for) and the counter-culture guerrilla of the Arkham Asylum and Killing Joke books.

This game is clearly being crafted by Batman fans, and with considerable visual flourish. We love the way that, when you walk into a new area, a flurry of bats spell out the name of your location. The environment is riddled with detail, while combat seems solid. The key question is whether the forensics and stealth elements can balance out the mindless thuggery of the melee – fun for five minutes but possibly not strong enough to carry a whole game. Just like Batman, perennially caught between justice and retribution, this could go either way.

Did you know?

Arkham Asylum shares its name with Grant Morrison's 1989 graphic novel, about the murderous Oedipal angstof its founder Amadeus Arkham. The name Arkham was inspired by a fictional city created by horror writer HP Lovecraft. The Asylum first appeared in Batman issue 258 in 1974, named Arkham hospital. Ith housed The Joker and Two-Face. The original Asylum was destroyed by supervillain, Bane, in issue 491. A new one was constructed in time for issue 521.

5 good reasons Why you'll want to be locked up in Arkham

The extras
Locations are filled
with Easter eggs and
in-jokes. You can
also unlock concept
art produced by DC's
Wildstorm imprint
and backstory trivia.

The gadgets

Snare enemies from a distance with the bat claw then drag them in like fish. It's hugely satisfying to see them squirming across the floor.

The darkness

Arkham is a hugely atmospheric, Gothic monstrosity, a looming Victorian nightmare of rusting steel, crumbling brick and steaming vents.

The bad guys

Eidos says other classic enemies will turn up but won't confirm any names, apart from Killer Croc. We want Two-Face and Scarecrow.

The combat

The combo-system encourages style rather than button-mashing, and special moves recreate Batman's brutal martial arts style.



OUTNOW

ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT2





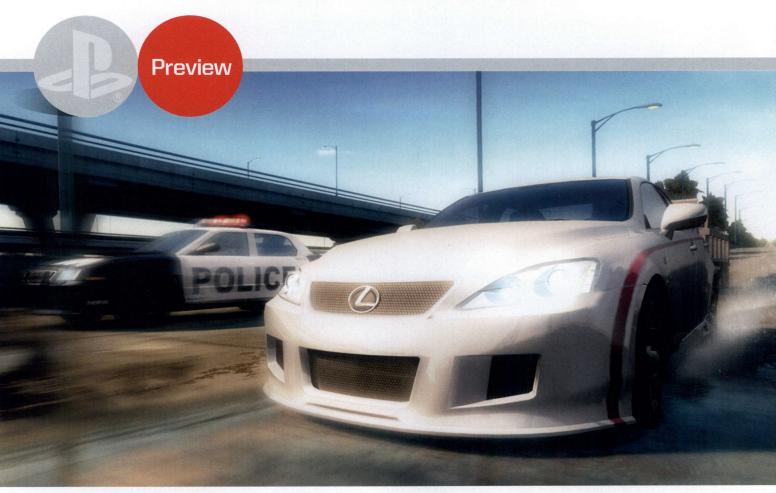
PlayStation_®2



Wii.



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Need For Speed Underground (PS2, 2003) NFS reimagined for



Need For Speed Carbon (PS3, 2006) Crew-based races made Carbon fussy



Need For Speed Pro Street (PS3, 2007) Track based. Bitburn. Classic Series Format PS3 ETA 21 November Pub EA Dev EA Black Box

Need For Speed Undercover

riangle Cops riangle Cars riangle Chase riangle Chicks

eon is dead. The Batmobile is in." So says Need For Speed Undercover producer Jesse Abney, explaining not only how the market for tuned import motors has 'matured' over recent years, but also why every car in his new game sounds like God coughing up a mountain. The daft fizz and flash of previous PS2 games is gone, replaced by growling fists of metal pounding the asphalt.

Q-car

As the title suggests, you play a cop going undercover in a high-end criminal network operating in the fictional Tri-City area. The result is a slick blend of glossily produced cut-scenes (featuring the series' latest leggy celeb star, Maggie Q) and super polished, near photo-realistic driving. And in stark contrast to the dusty, closed-off tracks of last year's Pro Street, Undercover marks a return to

the cops 'n' robbers racing of the series' roots. "It's the spiritual successor to Most Wanted," explains Abney, and we find out exactly what he means when we play Grand Theft 5-0, a mission which has you steal a squad

down to the level of glass splinters and ripped wing mirrors. And, for once, the camera isn't locked to the back of the car. Pull a 180° to avoid onrushing lawmen and rather than swinging you around with the back end, you instead watch the

"Every car in Undercover sounds like God coughing up a mountain."

car and then escape from a wailing pack of chasing police.

The resulting pile-up gives us a chance to examine the significant changes made to the cars themselves. Black Box's recently unveiled Heroic game engine gives new complexity and depth to everything, from the way the game calculates the forces acting on your vehicle to the new damage modelling. As Abney proudly tells us, "The cars come apart in more ways than ever," with damage now depicted

car twist from a distance. It's designed to give you time to appreciate the muscularity of the rides – with the power of their engines it's easy to pull off a J-turn or reverse angrily through a pile-up of pursuers. Crunching audio brings the whole game to menacing life – turbo squirts, brakes biting and big, shuddering impacts. "Physics are the heart of any racing game" says Abney, smiling as his car squeals into a smoke-hazed donut. "Bitchini," he says. And on this evidence, it just might be.







Can't Wait To Play...



Industry reveal their PS3 faves John McLaughlin Asc producer, Motorstorm: PR

Fallout 3



"FPS games are currently my favourite genre - when I can pull myself away from Pro Evo. This is shaping up to be a very nice title and one I'm looking forward to getting my teeth into. It's going to be vying against Resistance 2 for my attention over the next few months."



"Codemasters has a track record of great driving games and after Grid I'm excited to see what the guys can do with what seems to be a Motorstorm-type of game crossed with Mother Nature kicking serious ass. Looks like it could be great fun."

Crash Commando

"A 2D fragfest! What's not to like about this game? This is going to be a hit on PSN old-skool gameplay brought bang up to date. Just plain FUN, which is what gaming is all about. If you don't find this enjoyable then you must be dead inside."



Classic Series Format PSP ETA November Pub Sony Dev SCE Studios Japan

LocoRoco 2

△ Jelly ○ Colour ⊗ Broccoli □ Joy

PSP's happiest game is back, friends! Key feature for the sequel: more happiness. In case you missed Sony's 2006 blob-'em-up, it's a charming puzzle/platformer in which you tilt the world around you (via the shoulder buttons) to manoeuvre jelly-like creatures – LocoRocos – through hazard-strewn levels.

This time there are new rhythm action games where you have to hit in time with melodic cues. Nailing these sections rewards you with musical notes that level up your Loco, making it easier to collect Pickories – the game's version of currency that can be used to unlock mini-games.

Odds and blobs

It's still brilliantly Japanese – the art style, music and refreshing simplicity are totally disarming. And the streamlined controls work as well as ever, making tasks like pouring 20 puddle people through a giant

pinball-style contraption easy but also hugely satisfying.

There's also a greater emphasis on exploring the world around you with more environmental puzzles. These tie in well with the core risk vs reward mechanic that makes the game so compelling. Searching a level's every nook and cranny for pretty flowers, which add an extra Loco to your ever-expanding army, is balanced against avoiding Mojas – the black clouds of smog that look like the love child of Bob Marley and one of those squid-bots from The Matrix.

When you're solving puzzles that include using the head of a broccoli creature as a battering ram or using a tetchy penguin as a makeshift raft to cross the new water sections, the loveable eccentricity pouring from every pixel means you soon find yourself being won over by Sony's joyful jellies. They can't return to PSP quickly enough.







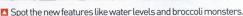
















FreeRealms

 \triangle Swords \bigcirc Sorcery \otimes Free \bigcirc Game



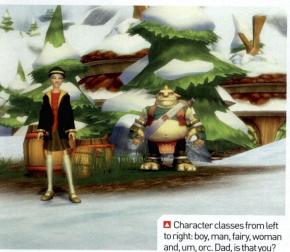
way to sum up Sony's massively multiplier online offering. But unlike WOW this is free. Like a mother's love or the straws at Burger King. It'll pay its way through ads as it loads (removed if you pay an optional subscription) and microtransactions: 50p for a new hair cut, say. So to recap: free. There will be adventures, pets to train, homes to furnish, plus minigames such as football, ice skating

and musical performances. As you play, character abilities and roles are chosen by what you wear. Want to be a ninja? Dress like one. Want to be something else? Take the black PJs off. The emphasis is on casual quests favouring teamwork and socialising over the usual MMO level grinding – meet some mates, spend a few hours clearing bats out of a jewel mine then call it a day, content in the knowledge that it cost you a big fat nothing.











Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA April 2009 Pub Blade Interactive Dev Blade Interactive

Hydrophobia

△ Water ○ Fire ⊗ Oil □ Bullets

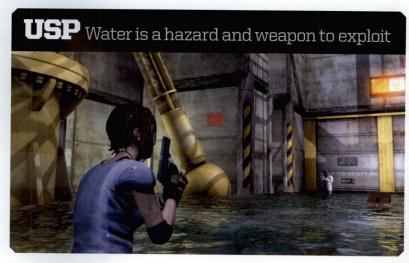
The good news? You are Kate Wilson. You're 8/10 hot (after a couple of pints). And you're pretty handy with a gun. The bad news? You're aquaphobic and happen to be trying to save a massive flooded cruise liner from futuristic terrorists. Bugger.

In the drink

This is Hydrophobia, a survival adventure from Blade Interactive, the brains behind, um, the World Championship Snooker series. Load of balls, then? We're hoping not. The premise is unique if a little off-the-wall, the enemies – called neo-Malthusians – at the very least sound cool, and the water FX are genuinely impressive.

(Who doesn't like water FX?) The $\rm H_2O$ is more than just cosmetic, as well.

"It's an action game at heart, but the water opens up a completely new level of ingenuity when you're playing," explains game designer Rob Hewson. "Do I shoot that window and let more water flow into the scene of the battle? Maybe it will wash my enemy out of cover and I can shoot him easily as he gets back to his feet; maybe it will carry that explosive barrel towards my enemy; maybe if I shoot the barrel first and create an oil fire I can then use the water to carry the fire in the direction of my enemy." It's this 'city at sea' dynamic on which Hydrophobia will sink or swim. Hands-on soon.





△ Ollie ○ Plant ⊗ Flip □ A&E

aving come from nowhere to topple the mighty Tony Hawk's, what does Skate do for an encore? It takes its complex but intuitive control system - the key to its surprise success – and makes it even more complex and intuitive. Skate 2 producer Jason DeLong explains, "The idea is that by combining things that existed in the original flick-it system you can see the skater do double the things he was able to do before."

It's like the game is joining the dots between stuff that was already there, but previously unconnected. In Skate you could grind and grab - but only separately. Now you can grind-grab by grinding and pressing the button mapped to either arm, 12 or 12. And there are loads of other moves that can be chained together in the same way - jumping grabs, grabs to flips, finger flips and footplants.

Bench mark

But this is more than just an expanded move-set. Your board is now an independent physical object, which means - yes - you can be separated from it entirely. You can do hippie jumps, not just a result of meticulous timing and a handily-placed obstacle, but on purpose with a press of both & and (a). You can walk up kerbs and

steps, or even drag in-game objects around to create custom setups full of perfect skating lines.

Not wanting to over-complicate things, Black Box has only added one new button - 11 is now a multipurpose 'grab the world' button. It's used for handplants, moving things around and also - maybe - for some interesting new stuff. "Can you grab other skaters?" DeLong answers with a big smile. "That's a very interesting question." How about other moving objects? Cars? "I am not at liberty to discuss that," he laughs through gritted teeth. That's a yes, then - and it sounds ace. Poor Tony.







Could Be A Contender

Savage Moon



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

A tower defence game where you strategically position sentry turrets to protect a mining colony from aliens.

The reality

Pixeljunk Monsters for adults. Instead of cartoon beasties you're repelling vicious spiny things called Insectocytes.

The hook

You don't fight, you position and move automated weapons to create a lethal crossfire, killing Insectocytes before they close in.

The inspiration

Starship Troopers. The Insectocytes are dead ringers for the movie's soldier bugs.

The chances

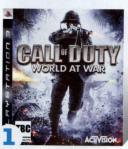
If it can capture Pixeljunk
Monster's 'one more go' feel
without the artery-rupturing
difficultly level then colour
us cautiously excited.

Format PSN download ETA Nov Pub Sony Dev Fluffylogic



urce Amazon.co.uk

Pre-Orders The punters' top three



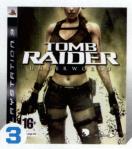
Call Of Duty: World At War

There's life in the old war yet as Treyarch takes the COD4 engine back to WW2 to fight in Berlin's streets and the jungles of the South Pacific. Format PSSETA 14Nov Pub Activision



Guitar Hero: World Tour

Lookout Rock Band. The original guitar game returns with more instruments, are cording studio and Van Halen and Michael Jackson on the set list Format PSS ETR 14 Nov Pub Activision



Tomb Raider Underworld

Making the most of PS3's processing muscle with vast levels and an incredible new hirdef Lara. Underworld is classic, no-frills grave-robbing.

Format PS3 ETA2| Nov Pub Fides









Preview



The Prince has beautiful places to visit.



Throwing bad guys in the air is always fun.



Doorways like this are only ever ominous.



You must earn your hits this time around.



Elika interacts with the Prince brilliantly.



Big man, big axe. Better do him over...



When combat goes bad.



Babysitting is out - Elika always catches up.



Your new squeeze is like another weapon.



Block or receive an unceremonious pulping. Elika has a cool, Prince-hurling trick.





Trimmed fingernails are not an option here.



The sense of scale is typically impressive.



A rare co-op NPC we don't want to kill.





Combat focuses on duel-style ebb and flow. Levels are huge, acrobatic playgrounds.

Classic Series Format PS3 ETA 5 December Pub Ubisoft Dev Ubisoft Montreal

△ A ○ One ⊗ Button □ Wonder

Of Persia



In the

Gemma Arterton



Gyllenhaal



Ben Kingsley Nizam

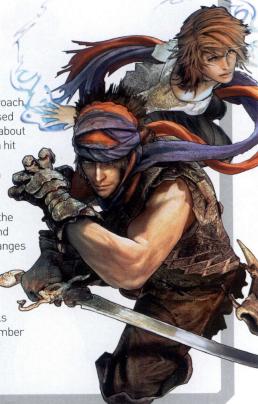
ur collective eyebrow was raised (well, more winched) at first sight of Prince Of Persia's new simplified control scheme. All the trademark wall-running, cliff-climbing tricks remain, but most actions are now mapped to a single button. Jump diagonally at a wall and the gravitydefying runs automatically kick in. Ditto for shimmying up rock faces and the new ceiling-run move.

Smooth moves

When it works, it works well. But the finesse and precision of the old games are sorely missed. Context-sensitive buttons mean the Prince is guessing what you want him to do. If you go for a wall-run at too steep an angle, he'll climb up the surface; too shallow and he'll jump down instead.

Elsewhere, the changes made are more welcome. The new approach to combat has genuine depth. Based around one-on-one duels, it's all about inching forward and sneaking in a hit before following up with a combo. Even the Prince's new companion Elika's magical attacks can be thrown into the mix.

New POP is a curious blend at the moment. It's beautiful, detailed and animated amazingly well. The changes that Elika's magic and acrobatics make to the hybrid singleplayer co-op platforming genuinely freshen things up, but those new casual-friendly controls need tweaking before the 5 December release. After all, this is Prince Of Persia, a game built on precision. Wooliness will not be tolerated.





tion Icon Format PSP ETA Spring 2009 Pub Sony Dev SCEA Bend Studio

Resistance Retribution

G ood news: Bend Studio has made PSP Resistance, which takes the alien-blasting series to mainland Europe, a third-person shooter, rather than trying to remould FPS controls for the PSP nub. And the cherry on the alien-flavoured cake? New tech called PSP Plus (you'll need to connect your handheld via USB lead to a PS3 running Resistance 2) enables you to play the game using a Dual Shock pad. Retribution uses auto-aim to target, but this is turned of when you hook up a controller - enabling you to

V for vendetta

aim freely with the sticks. Nice.

Set between the events of the original and Resistance 2, Retribution shoves you into the boots of former British Marine James Grayson. After his brother's death he sets out on a

grief-fuelled revenge mission and joins the Maguis (the European resistance) in order to kick Chimeran backside. The frenetic action and behind-the-

shoulder view comes on like a mix of COD and Uncharted, with a

> bit of Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror thrown in. You can expect to fight the same dentally-challenged aliens from the first game, plus some of the new Chimera from Resistance 2. Unless PSP gets a couple of Cell chips,

we doubt the Cloverfield-style colossus will be making it in, but the alien-eviscerating Auger, Carbine and LAARK will all be returning to your arsenal - handy for the eight-player, ad-hoc deathmatches on offer.

Hooking up to PS3 also enables Infected mode, where Grayson is hit by the Chimeran virus, enabling him to regenerate health, and opening up new areas and bits of collectible intel.

Superfan



"It's Resistance! Great story, fantastic twist of history. horrifying enemies, solid weapons. Now playing my PSP on the toilet is justified." Westgate-on-Sea

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ You must resist

Hosing endless waves of Chimera with seven mates in Resistance 2's brilliant co-op mode is the new going out.

▲ Quantum of hype

Tecmo reveals Quantum Theory, a new PS3-only third-person shooter, and it looks quite a lot like a Japanese take on Gears Of War.

▲ LittleBigLove

Sackboy best start building himself a new cabinet in the Create mode for all those Game Of The Year gongs.

▼ Quantum of sorro

Bond misses out on our reviews bonanza this month because his handlers fear movie spoilers. Not worried about the quality of the game, surely?

▼ Betrayed by Lara

Tomb Raider joins Fallout 3 and GTA IV in offering Xbox 360 owners exclusive DLC. It'll be points off the scores soon, kids.

▼ It's a dog's life

For God's sake don't tell the RSPCA, but our Fallout 3 pooch is no more. See, there was an incident with some raiders. Things got out of hand. Then, once it was over, we got hungry...





The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



Wanted: Weapon Of Fate

Format PS3 ETA December Pub Warner Bros This is essentially the seguel to the comic-inspired Angelina Jolie movie that hit cinemas during the summer (we didn't bother, either). It's notable for featuring bullets that curve in mid-air, and... precisely nothing else.



Left 4 Dead

Format PS3 ETA TBC Pub EA

Valve initially denied our story that its hotly-tipped co-op zombie shooter was coming to PS3, but now says it is a possibility. Sadly, marketing director Doug Lombardi says there's "zero



The Last Remnant

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Square Enix Blending a new battle system with God Of War-inspired quick-time events and dumping the RPG convention of random encounters, this is Square's



chance of it happening this year".



Shaun White Snowboarding

Format PS3 ETA November Pub Ubisoft

Our latest hands-on suggests this is a little beauty. Board handling is smooth, while tricking through the white stuff is both exhilarating and strangely soothing.



The Punisher: No Mercy

Format PSN ETA 2009 Pub Sony

PSN's first ever arena-based FPS is rich in Marvel heritage and offers eight-way multiplayer. All sounds good until you hear one of the arenas is set in another poxy shipyard. Triple sigh.



Format PS3 ETA March 2009 Pub Sega

Looking like a cert for the title of PS3's most impenetrable game, none other than the Australian World Of Warcraft champ tells us this RTS is "lightning quick and really good". Cheers sport!

There's more...

EA has canned bum-looking shooter **Tiberium**, presumably after realising that interest in anything Command & Conquer ended in 2003. It's also confirmed a three-game deal with Watchmen director Zack Snyder. Just when we thought it was safe to put memories of dancemats and The Vengaboys behind us, Activision has trademarked the name

Dance Hero. Remember part social sim, part dungeon-crawling RPG Persona 3? Thought not, but it was ace, and is getting a sequel imaginatively titled **Persona 4**. Teddie is our favourite character so far: A mysterious creature that the Protagonist and his friends encounter inside the TV." (Cough) The Ring (cough). Bomberman

Ultra, an update of the top-down explode-em-up, is coming to PSN later this vear, with eight-way online battles and four-man local multiplayer. Wondering what's happened to Vivendi's games since they were merged into Activision Blizzard? Well, Swordfish

50 Cent: Blood On The while Sony Pictures says it's still working towards a Ghostbusters release in 2009 (highly dubious we'll-believe-it-when-we-

see-it smiley face)



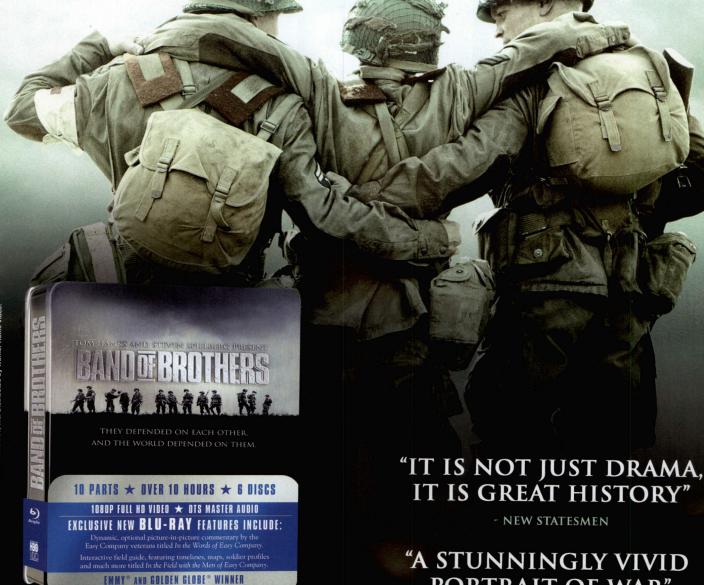
Format PS3 ETA Summer 2009 Pub Sony

New characters revealed to team up with or fight against in Sony Online Entertainment's could-be-spectacular superhero/villain MMO include venomous manbeast Bane and Bizarro, the anti-Superman. We like. Plus Geoff Johns, the renowned writer behind Green Lantern, Justice Society Of America and many more classic comics is penning storylines alongside legendary DC artist Jim Lee. Looking sweet, too.





BROTHERS ON BLU-RAY



"A STUNNINGLY VIVID PORTRAIT OF WAR"

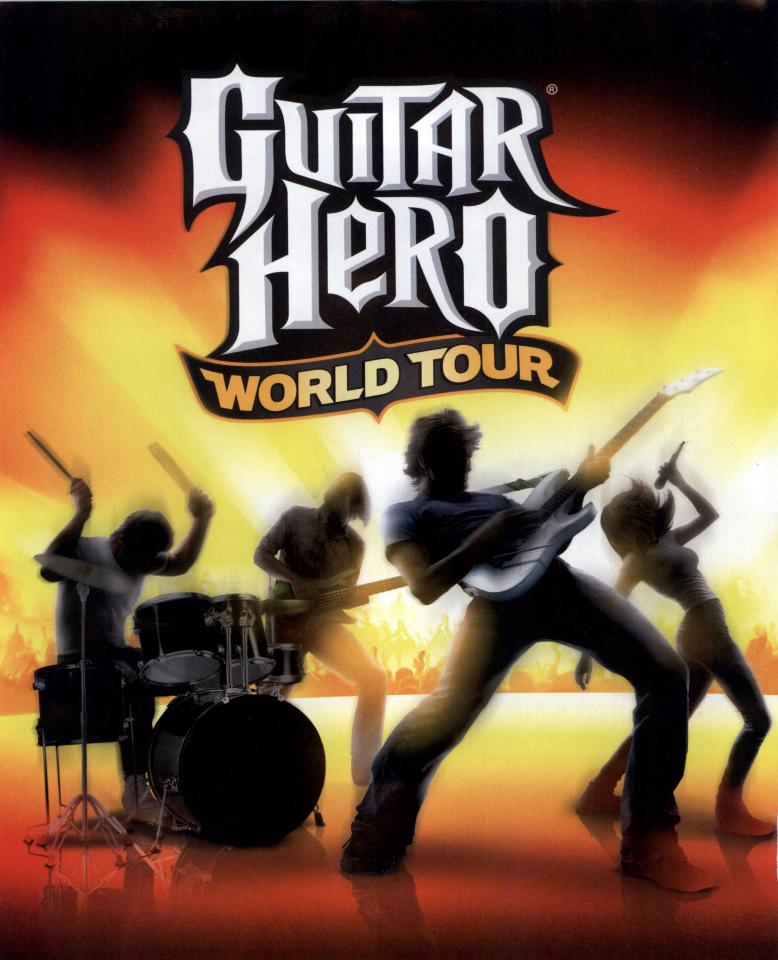
- EVENING STANDARD

EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

- \star Interactive Field Guide including Soldier Bios, Historical Timeline, Map, Chain of Command and Glossary
- ★ Picture-in-Picture Video Commentary by the surviving Easy Company veterans for all 10 episodes

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\textit{Leg.'}
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In the mood for. Gars

Forget the global fuel crisis with one of these Cell-powered beasts

Who cares if, in the real world, your need for speed is rationed by ownership of a Hyundai Amica with a knackered clutch? On PlayStation there's never an excuse for doing less than 230mph in car that can suck Kuwait dry before it hits third. Whether slipstreaming rednecks in NASCAR, wrapping fantasy metal around flyovers in Burnout or gazing with naked lust at a money shot Zonda in Gran Turismo before returning to fluff an entry-level Hyundai Amica [sigh] towards your first licence, cars are all about fantasies fulfilled. Here, then, are the hot bodies that keep us up at night.

Saleen S7 (Gran Turismo 4)

The Saleen S7 is a rare thing – a truly beautiful supercar that's not even slightly Italian. Saleen is based, in fact, in Michigan, yet the S7 is undeniably European. That long, low shape is a heart-skipping balance of feminine curves, masculine muscle, omnipotent flash and understated intent. Polyphony Digital does it the justice it deserves.

Chevrolet Impala (NASCAR 09)

NASCAR is enormous in the States, as are many of its fans. But Europeans think 'just turning left' is boring, preferring over-engineered, anodyne F1 cars in races that have right turns and Kimi Räikkönen. Dale Earnhardt Jr's National Guard-sponsored Chevy is stupidly low-tech, enormously butch and all the more exciting for it.

Ferrari F40 (GT5 Prologue)

Forget the ugly F1 car – and the interminable grind to earn it – the greatest Ferrari in GT5 Prologue is the F40. As an irresistible mix of power, feline curves and brutal body parts, it embodies the spirit of supercars. Okay, in Prologue it's overgeared and the suspension and turbos feel broken, but just *look* at it. Every detail is a kiss to the eyes.

Wombat Typhoon (Motorstorm)

This is the perfect antidote to the videogame glut of Skylines, Evos and gold-rimmed Scoobies. Its purity of design is almost maniacal – an insanely grunty engine tethered to its controls by metal rods, plus a seat. Nothing else. Driving this in Motorstorm, is like driving a boxer's face off a cliff and into the heart of the sun.





War Games

With the FPS genre stronger than ever, we paid a visit to Infinity Ward boss Vince Zampella to see what the creators of Call Of Duty 4 are up to, and find out what the secret to making a great shooter is...

Give us a potted history of Infinity Ward's relationship with Call Of Duty. How did it first start?

It started when we were working on Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault with EA back in the day. We left, formed our own team, started working with Activision, and that's where Call Of Duty was born.

So how many guys are left from the original EA days?

20. We don't have a huge turnover in the company at all. I'd have to think [to recall] anyone who's left. We started with 24, then we lost a couple of guys along the way.

Can you explain how the actual relationship works between Infinity Ward and Activision with COD? How have other developers like Treyarch and Spark become involved?

Well, Activision owns the franchise. Call Of Duty was successful, obviously, and they wanted to bring it to the console and have it in off years. We take two years to make the game and we want to do it right. So it was kinda that shifting one game every other year thing, which we didn't want to provide.

Is that something you guys are comfortable with? COD 4: Modern

Warfare did so well that we feel as though the series has become totally your thing now.

Yeah, so do we. We look at it like two different undertakings, so Modern Warfare is like its own sub-franchise. It exists independently of Call Of Duty somewhat. Obviously it's under the Call Of Duty umbrella, but it's its own thing, it has taken on its own life.

How did Modern Warfare come about? Were you guys tired of WW2? I think 'tired' of World War Two is a strong word. I could do another World



interview

Vince Zampella

War Two game. I think there's just so much there to draw from. But at the same time, we've done a lot of it, there's so many directions that we wanted to go, and things we wanted to do that you couldn't do in the World War Two universe. [Modern Warfare] allows you to take the stories to new levels, and tell your own story. The gear, and things that you can do in the modern setting gives a little more freedom.

Is it true that the original pitch to Activision was a modern shooter, but they wanted a World War Two game because they were in vogue?

Not necessarily. We had some ideas – when we start something up we leave everything open, and there are ideas that come out and there was probably a giant space mushroom in the first game. [Laughs] It was probably one of the first ideas. But one of the things we wanted to do was take on Medal Of Honor, and that was the game to do it with.

So in the wake of Call Of Duty 4, where are your heads at now? Is there anything you're sorry to have left out, or that you want to develop in future?

We're kinda in the throes of designing our next game [the new Modern Warfare game is due 2009]. There were some things that I would like to have included in COD 4. There was level where you could control a helicopter, but that got cut as we didn't have the time to make it as good as it could've been. There's nothing that I look at and go 'wow, that's horrible'. We took the pieces we wanted and made them as good as possible.

Call Of Duty 4 broke new ground for narrative in shooters. What do you think you've learnt about storytelling from making that game?

With World War Two, you're really confined in what you can do and where you can go. So this was our first game to really push the story in a direction that's our own. We worked with a television writer who's more into group collaboration, throwing ideas around. We changed whole story arcs. It's really a great collaborative process. It's how we do game design. We're very interactive - we try things, and we test things, and we throw them away. We brought that to the story side where we look at things, we deal out story elements, we try an idea, we go 'urgh, that's terrible', then we throw it away and start over until we get something that feels really good and really natural.

So did the idea to kill off a couple of the main characters come from the TV

writer? In games, usually, you hold on to your characters to reuse them.

It's hard to say where that came from. It's a whole team – the design team and the writers, everyone stands together. The idea is to go fast and furious, so it becomes hard to pinpoint that this is this person's idea, and this is that person's.

Captain Price isn't dead though, right? Right?

[Laughs] It's breaking you out of the convention. How many people [on the post-nuclear explosion level] said 'okay, look around, they're gonna come rescue me any second now'? It's breaking what you've come to expect from the game.

That character has been exposed to quite a lot of radiation...

But that's the thing – before that you go and rescue the pilot, you do this heroic thing. Then all of a sudden it's in vain. It's showing you the emotion of war and the levels of what horrors can be out there.

Out of interest, what load-out do you play with online, in term of perks and weapons?

I like Last Stand and I do like an MP5. Usually, I'm just like 'keep me alive as long as possible'. I need all the help I can get.

What kind of discussions do you guys have internally before starting a new Call Of Duty game?

We throw ideas around, we go from the [very basic] game idea, not forcing the high level concept, like 'Call Of Duty with blah blah blah'. We come up with the gameplay and then we form the game around that.

So after you made COD 2 and it was successful, how was the decision made to move to a modern setting?

[It was] the natural path of doing things that you can do – the set-pieces, the key moments in the game. It's like, 'where do we go, how can we take it to the next level? Well, if we do it modern we can have helicopters...' All that stuff naturally just grows in your

"It's showing you the emotion of war and the horrors that are there."

Our only real criticism was that sometimes it felt like you had to hit an invisible checkpoint to stop enemies spawning. Is that how it worked?

It's only the balance. We wanted to make the game fun and engaging – we didn't want the 'okay, I've shot two dudes and now I'm going to sit here and figure out what's going on' thing happening. You never want it to feel like there's an invisible level of guys just spewed out here. There's always a cap, there's never the infinite spawners. But we want a sense of accomplishment when you take a house – when you clear it out and everyone's dead inside and you're like, 'I worked to get this house'.

What's your view on how successful the multiplayer has been?

People got really good really quick. I expected to have more of an edge, because I've been playing it for a while. So I figured that for the first month or so I'm gonna be pretty good. But within two days people dominated it. I was surprised by how fast people ramped up and got into the whole scheme and took advantage of the perks – people took to it a lot quicker than I thought.

mind. You see all these really cool settings and things that you can do. It was time for us to go modern.

When did you first get the feeling it was going to work?

There are some early levels that didn't necessarily work. It felt too much like it wasn't a big enough change, it wasn't there yet. I don't know what we would call the big first moment when we went 'yeah!' I mean, there was stuff that didn't make it in that I still thought was really good.

It's locked at 60 frames per second too, which has a massive effect. Why do you think other developers don't manage that?

Yeah, you have to balance. You can work on some part of the technology and make it better, make it more refined, but we chose that we wanted the 60, we wanted it smooth. You do all this work on HD sound and animations, all the motion capture, to make it so believable, and if you play it back at 20fps, it's like, why did we bother? It makes things so much more fluid. That's what was important to us. Maybe it's not necessarily as important



Vince Zampella

A lot of that comes from that, the way the dialogue is so casual.

In the final moments you're shooting as your comrades apparently lie dying. Did you debate whether to show that?

Yeah, that took a long time to come together. Months and months of 'how best to do it'. It's obviously very emotional, we wanted to do a lot there, we wanted to be cinematic, big. It probably took six plus months to work on that, until it finally came together.

What were some of the other ways it could have played out?

Everything from 'a last moment rescue. everyone lives, take out the bad guys, woo!' all the way to 'everyone dies, you completely lose', and everything in between.

Were you nervous of what people's reaction to it would be?

We were pretty confident. It was raw. It felt like, it's a fun game, it's enjoyable, and yet it's still emotional and serious. You can walk away several moments after the game and go 'wow', and that's the feeling we wanted.

Did soldiers give you feedback?

We worked with a lot of soldiers. We bring them in and consult them about the game, photograph a lot of gear. We did a shoot with tanks. We work with the military to get their feedback early on, and we've had feedback since then and a lot of the guys really like it.

How does your relationship with fellow COD developer Treyarch work?

The studios do their own thing, but we do have a good relationship and talk back and forth. It's obviously a friendly situation, but it's two separate studios doing their own thing.

And if it were you, how would you keep the World War Two genre sexy?

There's a lot you can do. If we were to do a WW2 game again, we have some good ideas.

So it's not something you'd be adverse to, going back to WW2?

No. I don't think it's going to happen in the next game or two, but I'm not adverse to it.

For now you guys are committed the Modern Warfare brand, then?

It's definitely something we couldn't do before because we were a team, but now that we've broken that area we can take that back to World War Two and do some different areas. As I said, we've got some good ideas, some stuff that we kind of thought about from COD 2 that got cut out.

to other developers, maybe they felt another feature was more key to their game.

What were the kinds of games you were looking at while you were making Call Of Duty? Did you still feel any competition with Medal Of Honor?

I think it's a different kind of game, it's not really anything to worry about. We play a lot of the Clancy games, but it's a different style of game so it's not direct competition. There's a lot of goodness there - we play it, we look at them. That's one of the great things about the company. The core of us are big game players. You ask my wife she'll complain every night. We'll go home late and be like we're going to log on at 9, and we're going to play...'. We play Gears Of War, and it's a different style of game again, but it's something that's fun. I think it took things in a different direction that was good.

Given how popular levelling up your XP and gaining perks has been, have you thought about of making the RPG side deeper?

Anything's possible. But we like to tell a story and deliver a gameplay experience, and the RPG stuff is harder to do with a different type of game. Look at Fallout 3, which I can't wait to play - that's a different type of game, a different type of experience. If we can think up a way to marry the two then sure, but it's a challenge right now to deliver that cinematic type of experience, playing the action movie, and keep it completely free and open.

If you had to write down the rules of making an exciting shooter, what do you think they would be?

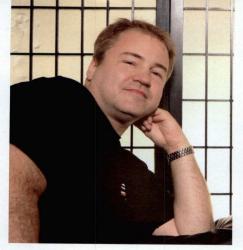
Controls, accessibility and atmosphere. Those would be mine.

It seems there are so many basic things that people get wrong, like the grenades in some games just pop, and unless you're standing on top of them they don't damage you...

Yeah definitely, it's our take on it. We like the authentic feel, where things behave as you expect them to. A lot of times, it's not 100% accurate - it's more action movie authentic. So, when a window breaks, do you want it to be real, or do you want it to be fast? You want to balance the two. You don't want it to look ridiculous, but you want to feel cool when something breaks or blows up.

But then the thermal imaging mission, Death From Above, works so well because it's so realistic: shooting silently in black and white.





Who is.. Vince Zampella

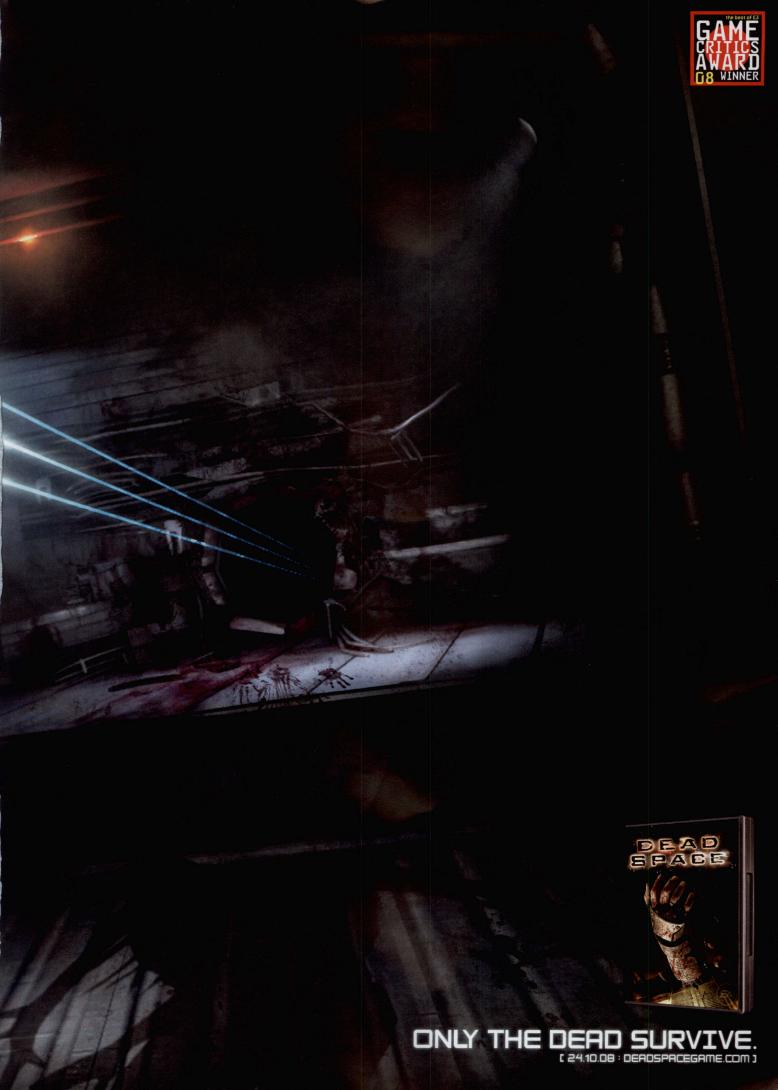
Formerly a producer at developer 2015 (the studio behind Electronic Arts' flagship Second World War shooter Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault) Zampella left the company in 2002 to set up Infinity Ward with Grant Collier and Jason West. In 2003 Infinity Ward released the first Call Of Duty for PC. Since then several different versions have been released for console and PC, with other developers – Spark, Treyarch – brought in as support. Last year Infinity Ward released their latest sequel, Call Of Duty 4, which is widely considered to be the best shooter of all time

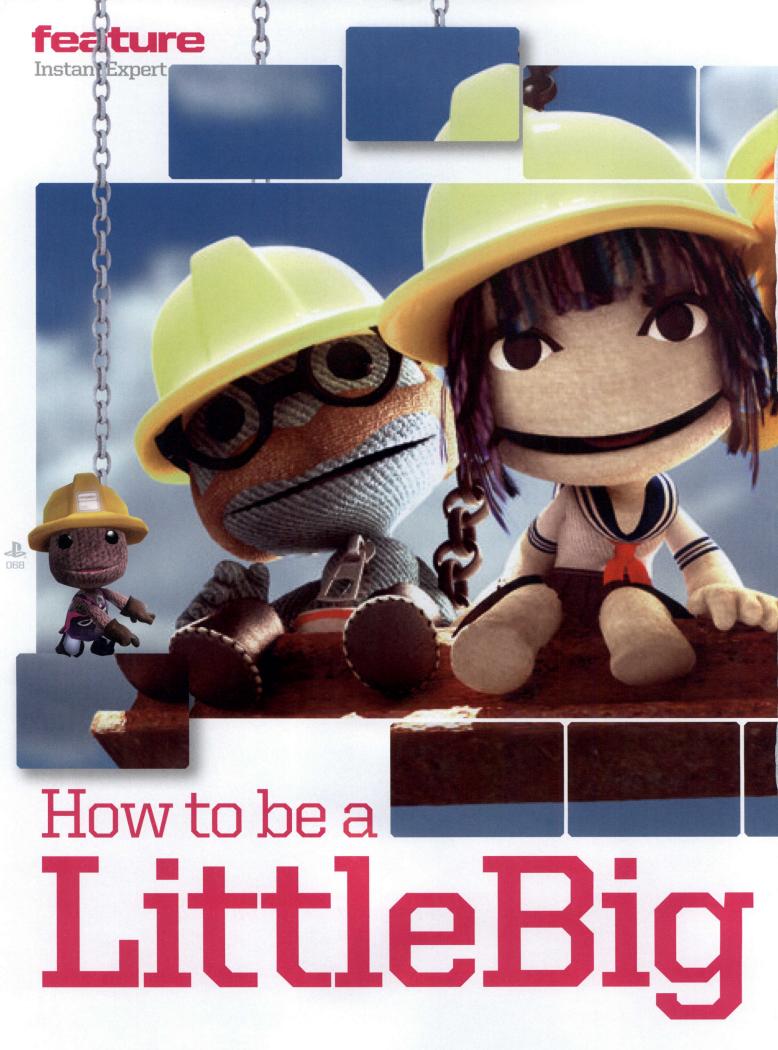


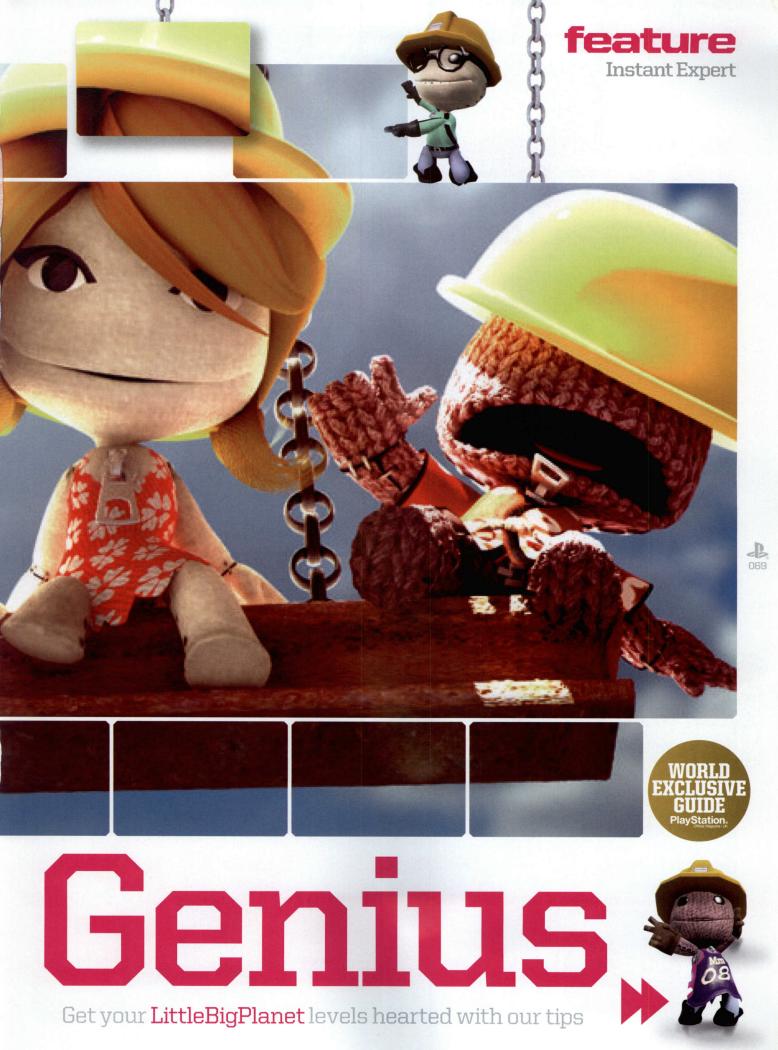














LBP pro tips

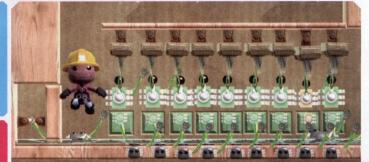
We visited developer Media Molecue to get the inside track on how to design your way to online glory...



It keeps everything in place while constructing and joining elements. Unpause to check how it plays, and don't forget you can hit to undo if it all goes wrong-shaped.

Face forward

Front View is invaluable for lining things up and much clearer than Perspective View. You'll find it in the man menu.



Save constantly

You can never guarantee what's going to happen, and if a change wrecks your efforts you'll be glad you backed up regularly.



Ask for feedback

Get people to playtest your level as early as possible. Invite your mates over, or online, and see how they play your creation. It's the best way of fine-tuning your effort and discovering problems.



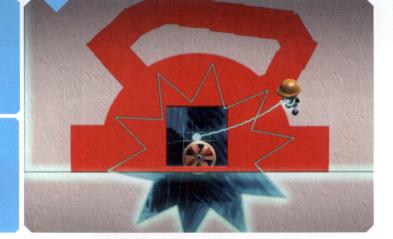
Cut to the point

If you need to make changes to a large, multilayered object then cut out small sections so you can reach the bits you need in the background rather than dismantling the whole structure.

Cover it up

You can use the PS Eye cam to take snaps of textures and then apply them as stickers. It's a great way of disguising the green Dissolve material so as to create surprises for the player.







No one wants to replay a to put in a checkpoint. Playtest constantly to

really hard bit or walk for miles because you forget get the pacing spot on.



The dark side

Dark Matter stays wherever you put it - great for hanging platforms from. Rather than using it to Tack. It's super-strong and will hold any weight.



Test players' brains with a simple puzzle

Make an 'and gate' to add extra objectives

A These two sponge blocks each have coloured Magnetic Keys attached, which activate the Magnetic Key Switch of the same colour once they're moved close enough (the handle-shaped things next to the wooden door).

> B The yellow and blue Switches are, in turn, attached to separate pistons in the green Switch mechanism above - they each activate a piston on the side of the middle block. This Switch is inverted, meaning the green Keys on either side must be taken away to turn it on, so when the Pistons kick in, you're in business.

Be a copyis

Use the 'capture object' tool to build a library of machines

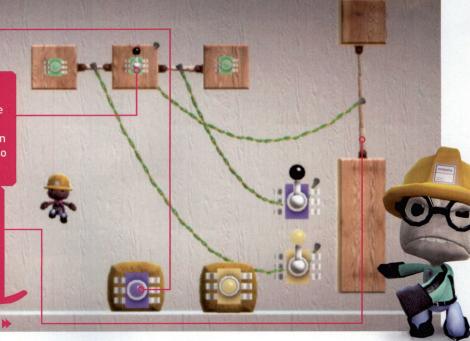
adapt. Also, copy unlocked online levels to the My Levels moon and you can then see how they work in edit mode.

> C The green Switch is attached to the door Piston, meaning it'll only open when you have moved both original sponge blocks into position. Extend the idea by chaining sequences together for even more complex objectives.



Play on, maestro

Make a song from rows of Sound Objects attached to Magnetic Key Switches on evenly-placed blocks. Now make a cart, attach a Key, and as sackboy pushes it past



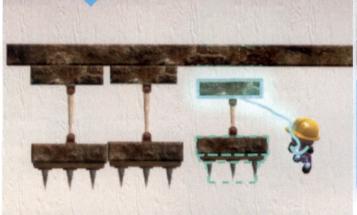
feature

Instant Expert



Create, then move

Avoid physics-based mess-ups by designing objects in a safe empty area, then moving them into their final position using the Pop-it cursor. That way you won't overwrite other elements.





Make time bombs

Put a Magnetic Key Switch and Magnetic Key on two separate blocks, then join them with a Piston that's set to slowly bring them together. Now wire the Key Switch to explosives and adios sackboy.

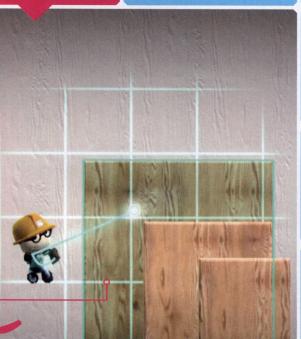


The best levels use all three planes of Z-axis movement (ie, into and out of the screen). But don't let sackboy fall behind the scenery!

> A Even if you're roughing your level out on paper, try to draw it using all three dimensions (X, Y, and Z) because players enjoy being able to jump in and out of the screen, rather than being locked to a 2D design.

B Be aware of space when creating obstacles. Don't spend ages constructing a hazard that players can simply run around or jump between layers to avoid.

C Use The Large Grid in the pause menu to judge distance. Three squares along is the furthest a sackboy can comfortably jump, while one up is the maximum height he can manage.



Stay thin

backgrounds or scenery. That way players won't be able to find routes you didn't up into areas you didn't want to them to reach.



Tweak first

objects using (a) before you This enables you to position multiple

Make winning fun



Collecting mountains of Score Bubbles piled high is far than running through them in a

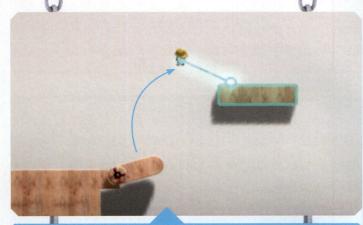
Get a good start

a big level in Play mode? Just move the entrance there in Edit mode, you've got easy access to the area.









Safe landings

When building flippers or springboards, set them up first and see where they fling your sackboy. Create your landing platform wherever he comes down and you'll save plenty of trial and error time.

mart signposts

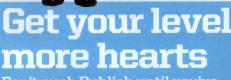
If you want players to know where to go, it's probably a good idea to show them



crumbs to mark a path for people to follow. They're a great way of highlighting a path or giving players motivation to follow a certain route.

viewpoint and highlight the way forward. Not only does it show the player where to go but it also adds drama by revealing hazards and adding variety by breaking up the usual 2D view.

> C Lighting is a powerful way to lead the eye. Well placed illumination will draw players in the right direction without making it obvious they are being led. It's one of the most common tricks in the game design handbook.



Don't push Publish until you've read this little lot

A Make a unique badge to use as take in-game pictures, or use image. Oi, trousers back up.

C Give your creation an exciting

level, email your mates and get effect, keeping your level on the more popular Moons.

BAs soon as you publish your



feature Instant Expert



Here's one you made earlier



Inspire yourself with our favourite LittleBigPlanet levels, hand-picked from the pre-release Beta

Houston, We Have A Problem

Created by Dead_Air

Word cloud Fun Space Rockets Aliens

Everyone loves rockets in LBP. There are rocket cars, rocket sledges, even rocket horses. At least Dead_Air decided to make an actual rocket—one that flies for miles before crashing onto the moon. There you can drive around in a NASA buggy and meet the melon-headed locals before coming home in another rocket in time for tea.

















World Of Colour

Created by geosautus

Word cloud Switches | Clever | Ingenuous

Stuck for ideas on how to use Switches? This is a great level for aspiring engineers. Geosautus has used Grab Switches, Sensors and Timers to great effect. The more coloured blocks and platforms you interact with, the more points you score. Also a classic example of how to carry a simple theme – in this case, three colours – through the design.



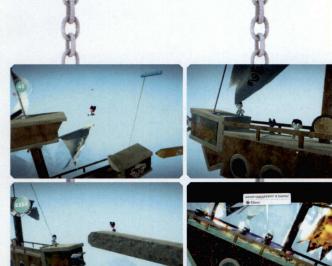
Created by HeadWind

Word cloud Simple | Perfect | Fun | Platformer

This may be short and sweet but it's a brilliant example of a well-tested and balanced level. You won't find any frustratingly broken jumps, or seemingly impossible to avoid hazards. It shows perfectly that an uncomplicated level can still be huge amounts of fun if it's crafted with care.







LittleBig Sky Pirates!

Created by slickant

Word cloud Big Pirates Platformer Funny

This is a huge adventure where rival sky pirates battle in rocket-powered ships that roar across the sky. It's up to you to board enemy vessels, defeat the crew and scupper their galleons as you reclaim your ship's stolen treasure. The huge sense of scale, funny characters and simple plot raise this above the more basic LBP offerings.



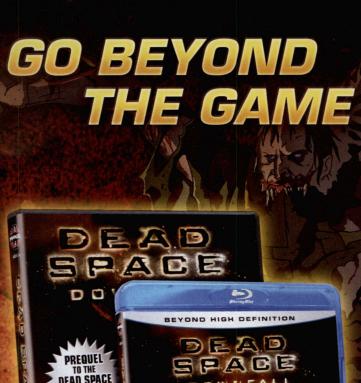
Heist (Part 1)

Created by jiggles

Word cloud Crime Adventure Clever

There's a bank to rob and only you can do it. Drive to the job, get past the cops, find the vault then lastly (and brilliantly) enter a combination to open the vault. The first of a multi-part adventure, with a second instalment - The Heist (Part 2) - already published.







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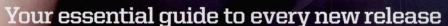
December 2008

The OPM review setup



PlayStation of Official Magazine - UK

EV



Things have gone proper mad on reviews this month. We've got an embarrassment of exclusives for you massive shooter sequel Resistance 2, urning icon Tomb Raider derworld, pretty new thing Mirror's dge, Clancy-branded general-'em-up Endwar and rejuvenated wrestler Smackdown. And they're ably backed up by a huge roster of other big names -Johnny come lately Bioshock (it's okay, we forgive it, in a big way), dirty mudflapper Motorstorm Pacific Rift, flashy street racer Midnight Club Los Angeles, jungle stalker Far Cry 2 and cold-blooded killer Dead Space.

The really incredible thing isn't that all these big games have turned up at once - Christmas is just around the corner, after all - but that the quality running through them is so consistently high. Like, really, really high. At one point during this issue the list of big game scores read like the emergency services phone number. Then, luckily, Saints Row 2 arrived.



RESISTANCE 2

Nathan Hale screws up his angry yellow eyes and shoots seven shades of sorry out of the Chimeran invaders in this huge PS3-exclusive sci-fi sequel



TOMB RAIDER

UNDERWORLD
Lara returns with a familiar mix of puzzling and acrobatics, and a wardrobe of clingy, dripping, ripped... wait, what?



MIRROR'S EDGE

Clinically clear brilliantly original and panting gaming? It j

How we score our reviews...

Essential

Outstanding

Very good

5 Average

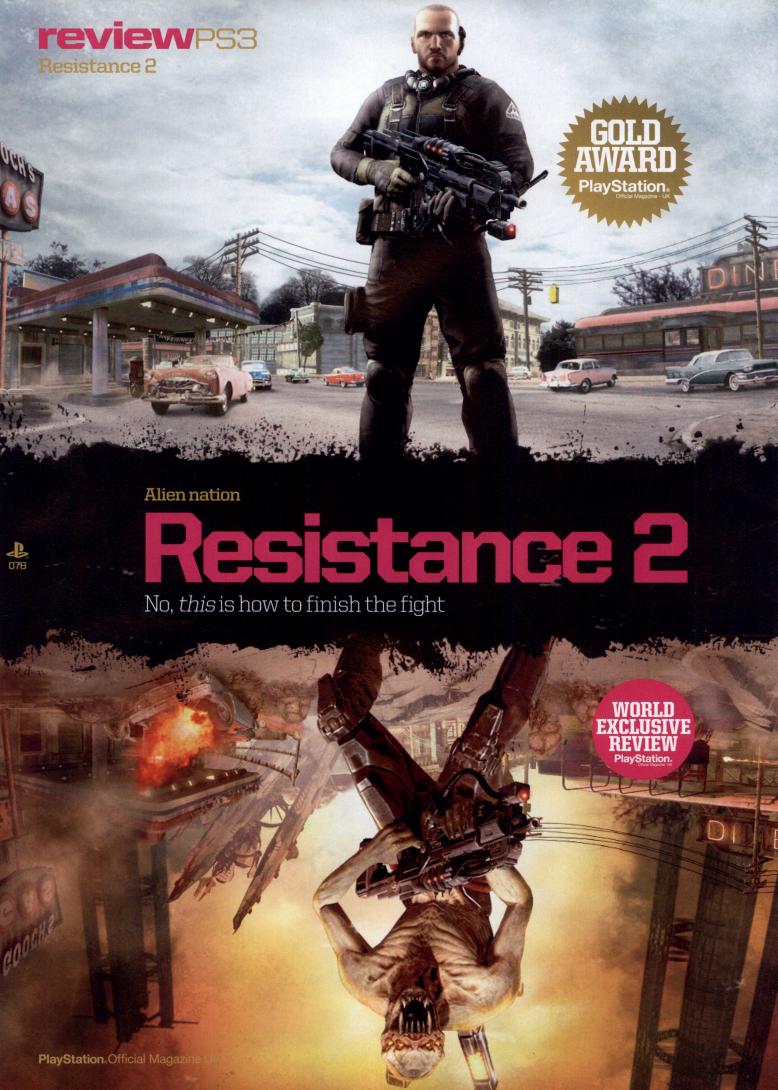
Below average

2 Awful

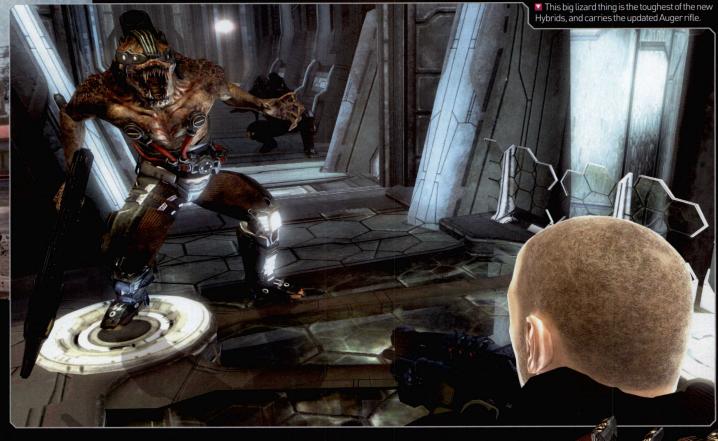
1 Horrific

GOT.D AWARD

Our highest



reviewPS3 Resistance 2





et's say you wanted to make a PS3 shooter. Tough niche. How the hell are you going to make your shooter stand out from all the others? Let it loose in an open world environment like Far Cry 2? Ditch the guns almost completely and make it about a pretty girl jumping on walls like Mirror's Edge? Maybe you'd go for lavish design and finely crafted storytelling like Bioshock?

Well if you're Insomniac and you're making the sequel to PS3's best-selling launch title, you don't do any of these. Instead you take what you had before - a linear, cinematic sci-fi adventure with a cool alternate history storyline and the most iconic extraterrestrials since Giger's Alien - and you make it big. Big in terms of scale - boss fights that reduce hero Nathan Hale to a wriggling dot in the palm of tower-block mutations.

Big in terms of quality - urgent, involving action with tons of variety. And big in terms of just being really, really big, with a blockbusting singleplayer mode, a 15-hour plus co-op campaign and potentially endless competitive matchmaking.

Ugly beautiful

It goes without saying that all this means making it prettier. This is Insomniac's third full-sized PS3 game and it's moved well past the gritty but grey battlefields of the first Resistance. You'll notice it in the characters first, the way they're bright and almost cartoonishly solid, but detailed too, with scars and stubble and frowns (hey, we're being invaded). And then you'll notice it in the world - the depth of the textures, the way the lights pick out every curve and shadow of the striking, streamlined alien architecture now erupting from or floating above our battered planet.

That's where the story's at - we're losing. Pretty badly. Hale's been airlifted straight from the end of the first game to a secret base in Iceland with other



reviewPs3

Resistance 2





Name Tim Clark Angle Shooter junkie

felt a bit 'My First Shooter', whereas this is the full alien-flavoured enchilada. My and that's what Insomniac has delivered. The guns just feel so much beefier and the Chimera are far more aggressive. They die easier, but so do you. The result is it feels a hasn't got your pre-order, you're lost to me."

Best for...

soldiers immune to the Chimeran virus, but just as he arrives it blows up (this becomes a theme). One grand, opening mech-beast fight and daring escape later, Hale is shipped to San Francisco, and to an America which has so far resisted the Chimera thanks to its powerful air and coast defences. So far. Skip ahead two years and Hale is rushing through an underground base to find the air above the Golden Gate Bridge thick with enemy airships in the most beautiful invasion imaginable, which sends Hale and his Chimerajuiced buddies battling across under-siege USA.

It takes two, baby

But what of the actual shooting? The game's moved to a two-gun system, rather than the backpack arsenal of the first game. It means swapping weapons in and out as you need them, often at

the unsubtle prompting of the level design ('What's this? A powerful machine gun propped against a car in the middle of nowhe - OH GOD, DRONES!'). But mostly it means that because you can't carry the equivalent of a small nuclear payload in your trouser pocket, the guns you do have are more effective, putting down enemies so fast and hard it feels like you're channelling God's best angry stare. This is a big change from the first Resistance,

Trophies



The end Gold for beating the game. Yeah!



Making friends



Sharp shot



Click boom



Weaker Hybrids wear no armour except a pair of space pants, and die pleasingly quickly.

when the Chimera felt tough and chewy and the final few levels were like shooting your way through a really angry meat locker. Now regular grunts hit the deck after a couple of bursts, giving you a proper sense of oomph from your guns.

Ah – the guns. Insomniac does great guns, which makes its games feel like a cross between a toy chest and an experimental weapons laboratory. The best stuff from before returns, but tweaked - like the previously useless Auger, which still shoots through walls, but now crucially paints your enemies a shimmering green so you can see them while behind cover (leading to big, fistpumping cries of 'Where are you gonna hide now? Where? NOWHERE').

But what's really exciting is the new stuff. Like the Magnum, which will take down Hybrids with a single headshot and fire explosive rounds detonated with the secondary trigger. The result is an instant shooter classic - popping a round with (11) and then quick-tapping



Five epic moments to see



THE GOLTATH

vare that the first Resistance started with a whimper rather than a bang, Insomniac throws this big metal Charlie at you as Take that Iceland!



INVASION EARTH

fills the Californian sky, with dozens of smaller craft darting in moment on PS3



DARK PLACE

A pitch-black railway tunnel packed with cocoons on the floor, walls and ceiling. They burst, of bodies flickering into the glare of



THE LEVIATHAN

The giant boss who epitomises Resistance 2's attitude to size: wise – the fight plays out like a

11/1/1



THE SWARM

A terrifying electrical thing that chews through your support Chimeran tower in Chicago, It's an older, purer form of the Chimeran

12 to make it go boom. Or, even better, plugging several rounds into a charging Chimera, then waiting for others to step over his body before using him like a messy remote mine. Then there's the Wraith chain gun, which makes you feel safe like a big older brother, only one with a firing rate of several thousand rounds per minute who can project a mobile energy shield like a bulletdeflecting windscreen.

Gear shift of war

So the core of the game is shooting, of course, and that shooting feels good. But, taking its cue from Call Of Duty 4, Resistance 2 clearly understands the value of breaking things up with changes of speed and style. It's full of little down-shifts in pace, like early on when you're talked through a stealthy warehouse escape from a shielded flying drone - on my mark, turn left, get to cover - or later when you're racing to find a route to high ground amid rapidly rising waters in Chicago.

New enemies are introduced to mix things up, too. Not just new variations on the foot soldiers - who are now mostly just things you see disappear in wet, red flashes through your scope - but others like the Chameleon, a cloaked Chimera with one-slash-kill claws that you first meet in the forests outside San Francisco. They're effective to a point -



"The dynamic has transformed from war shooter to survival horror."

they certainly slow you down, listening for that tell-tale rumbling with fingers wrapped white around your Rossmore shotty – but it sometimes feels like the game is saying, 'you're dead unless you press fire within half a second'.

Much better are the Grims. These stringy, unarmed Chimera are what's become of most of Chicago and Twin Falls, the small town you head to after the scene-setter in San Fran. The idea is that the Chimera have developed a way to convert humans using bugs that weave their victims into heaving meaty cocoons, and their introduction is an impressive flex of Resistance 2's storytelling muscle. After the blitzing panic of a forest ambush, you stumble out into an eerie, ruined suburbia. It looks deserted - cosy tunes floating from the wireless, an abandoned tricycle in the drive, the haunting squeak of a gently swaying swing. Except the people aren't gone, they've just been

turned into rows of fleshy statues. And they're everywhere - on the road, in houses and in gardens.

88 : 458 III 82

And once you've wandered far enough in - far enough to find the uninfected suicide corpse of a father resting next to that of his Chimeran son, far enough to realise there are more cocoons than you have ammo to shoot or time to smash with your hands - then they start popping. Just one or two at first, then more, and louder. And then they scream and swarm as you run, gunning. They go down easy, but there are so many - it totally transforms the game's dynamic from war shooter to frantic horror survival.

Mean boss

And then it's back to more straight shooting. That's the mechanic - shoot, break, shoot, the game not giving you room to get jaded before moving on. And dropped on top of that are the chapter-

reviewPS3

Resistance 2





■ The Marksman is a bit like Halo's Battle Rifle, but punchier and with a sexy pop-up scope.

murdered with co-ordination.

There are three playable classes -Soldier, Medic and Special Ops - each with an interrelated support function. So the Soldier fires his big gun and casts a shield for his squadmates, but needs resupplying from the Spec Ops guys and healing from the Medics. Encouraging everyone to play nice is the fact that XP is awarded both for damaging enemies



■ The overheating Titans return – alone they're easy, but in twos or more they're a nasty prospect.

ending boss battles. Gameplay-wise these are punishingly old-fashioned, boiling down to learned patterns of running and shooting. But even if they don't give you a fluid test of skill, they look incredible and are at least guaranteed to give you an occasional 'Oh God!' moment - like when the writhing Kracken tilts your measly water platform on its end and you begin to slide into its glistening maw, or when the skyscraper-sized Leviathan reaches down with a mammoth hand to scoop you from your rooftop hiding place.

And that's where we'd normally wrap things up, barring a guick moan about clunky invisible checkpoints that freeze your squadmates until you've completely cleared out certain areas, and a word about the brilliant, brutal ending. But this isn't the end - this is only the beginning, thanks to Resistance 2's unique online setup.

First there's the co-op, which is balanced very differently to the main game. With up to eight men fighting the Chimera, the satisfying quickdrop enemies of the single-player are transformed into monstrously enduring bullet-sponges. It takes a bit of getting used to - initially the constant noise and battering gunfire make it feel chaotic, and the intensity is upped to siege-level - but really it's just all about stopping yourself from being overrun and

"Resistance 2 is fixed in all the ways we wanted - it's bigger, tighter, meaner."



VERDICT 10

Ratchet 8 Clank: Tools Of Destruction somniac's other baby, featuring an equally scientist's tool box of weapons, only this time a little friendl **VERDICT** 9

(instant gratification numbers appear above their heads as you shoot) and helping squadmates. It's simple to get the hang of and frantically replayable there's no consistent story (Insomniac preferred the idea of drop-in sessions with mates), and the five map areas feature various mission objectives and multiple, randomly generated routes.

Make war not love

Competitive multiplayer is a return to more standard men shooting each other in a big online arena, only with some post-COD4 additions. There are no classes, but you can customise your load-out by choosing not only your primary weapon but also a Perk-like Beserker option - stuff like more powerful ammo, radar boost,

increased armour. The main draw is the size of it - up to 60 players in a single game. And more incredible than the numbers is the fact that from what we played, it really works.

Team deathmatch feels like a real war - super hectic with random hot zones where dozens of men decide to fight over a patch of grass. The levels are big enough that even with 30 people wanting to murder you it's possible to find plenty of quiet corners, but not so big that the action's ever hard to find. The objective modes - variations on capture the flag and king of the hill - feel the most like regular online as you're isolated within your six-man squad.

But the bottom line is that it's huge, and we'll have an in-depth look at the ranking and progression after its release. Because you're getting this, right? It seems crazy not to. Resistance 2 is fixed in all the ways we wanted - it's bigger, tighter, meaner - and the online

PlayStation.

is trying some extraordinary new things. Is is better

than COD4? No, but even we've got to move on sometime - and we'll be doing it holding the worn, weathered hand of Nathan Hale.

Nathan Ditum





PSP. More than just gaming...



SKYOO



IT'S HERE













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Info

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It's like deling the
Princess Of Persia,
inthe future, and
with everyone
shooting at you.

nly an idiot would design a game based entirely on jumping using the first-person perspective.

Look back at the entire history of first-person games and you won't find a single one, shooter or otherwise, in which the jumping bits weren't universally acknowledged as the worst bit. It's just never worked. You can't line up your feet accurately, or judge the distance, and at any sort of speed trying to work out where to go next is a disorientating mess. Remember trying to hop between rocky pedestals jutting out of a 64-bit pea souper in the original Turok? Of course you don't, because the memory is too traumatic and has to be buried next to what happened at Scout camp. Which is why the most startling thing about

So it turns out that developer DICE aren't idiots. In fact they might be some kind of magicians, because what they've done is to analyse the reasons why acrobatic first-person movement didn't work previously, and then come up with elegant solutions for them. The result is a game in which you're able to hurtle across rooftops, leap between skyscrapers, shimmy up pipes, slide under gaps and tippy toe across wafer-thin beams – all while being shot at. It's one of the freshest game dynamics of this generation so far, and certainly the most interesting thing to happen to the first-person genre since Call Of Duty 4 pushed the bar out of reach for almost every other developer.

Leap of Faith

Here's how DICE pulled it off. The control system is incredibly simple – • to jump, • to slide/roll, • to turn through 90/180° and • to attack. More significant are the sticks – right to look and left to move, as usual, but the

difference is in the way Faith moves. (You play a painfully cute free-runner who's trying to save her cop sister from the clutches of a near-future fascist conspiracy. And breathe out.) Nudge the stick forwards and she accelerates smoothly, speed blur skimming the edges of the screen. Push left or right while sprinting and, rather than turn, she strafes sideways. The effect is that you're able to flow constantly forward, reassessing the scenery for elements

What you do in... Mirror's Edge

18% Biting your tongue as you plunge towards the pevement.

4% Being rifle-butted in the face after missing thered disarracue.

9% Scratching your head, wondering how you're going to get all the way up there.

→ 17% Running from the city's trigger-happy lawmen. "You'll never catch me... Oh."

→ 37% Holding your breath as you launch yourself into the cool blue sky.

15% Praying to merciful mother Mary that the next checkpoint comes up soon.

reviewPS3 Mirror's Edge



review PS3

Mirror's Edge





Keep your speed up, the screen blurs, and the bullets will miraculously miss you. It's an ace idea.

to grab, leap and duck. And, when you're really flowing, it's a unique and amazing feeling. Forget making a comparison with conventional shooters – Mirror's Edge actually shares more of its DNA with the likes of Skate, Prince Of Persia and Burnout in that it gives you the same sense of surging through the level, always a heartbeat away from wiping out, but elated when you don't.

So why don't you get lost? Two reasons. First is the button, which tilts your vision towards where you need to go next. In the more complex, open areas it's a godsend, enabling you to keep moving without having to stop and get your bearings. And you don't want to stop, because you're often being pursued by armed police who operate a shoot-to-cut-in-half policy. (Any notion that the danger might only be illusory is dispelled by the savage helicopter gunships.) The second reason is the game's astonishing

art design. The city in which Mirror's Edge takes place is constructed from bleached Brutalist architecture with equally stark interiors. The whiteout is punctuated by vivid splashes of colour, partly to accentuate the sense of speed, but also as a subtle way of showing you where to head next. Less subtle are the objects you need to climb, jump or interact with, which are painted tomato red. It's explained away as 'Runner Vision' - a reflection of Faith's ability to see paths where others wouldn't but it can also be switched off, and gets used less as the difficulty ramps up. Throw in the Manga cut-scenes used to tell the story roughly: corruption lurks under the surface of a seemingly utopian city - and what you're looking at is the most

bracingly stylish PS3 game to date. Our worry, though, was that the initial impact would wear off. That once we'd got used to pulling off high-speed gymnastics, it might get old. And up to a point it's a valid concern. Beyond the first three or four levels, the game essentially performs variations on the same jump/ slide/climb riff. But it seems harsh to criticise Mirror's Edge for being one-note when that note is a soaring polyphonic chord of justice. Also, when you break it down there are actually three types of gameplay blended here.

Run and gun

The simplest of these is the athletic puzzling – Faith verses the environment, with no pressure from the police. Here the game feels closest in spirit to Tomb Raider, with real thought required to plot

Influences How Mirror's Edge came together











Prince Of Persia

Le Corbusier

Run Lola Run

Tomb Raider

Equilibrium

reviewPS3 Mirror's Edge



■ The descent into this enormous storm drain is one of many standout set-pieces.



"Not my beautiful leeeeeeeeeegs!" Seeing the blue sky rush away as you fall is no fun.



"Bottom line is you've never played anything like Mirror's Edge. It's a genuine original."

a path forward. The second, and best, of the elements is the chase stuff - when you're powering over obstacles with the cops close behind and bullets pinging off the scenery. It's massively cinematic, never been done before, and although it sounds like an exaggeration, really does capture the panicky thrill of being chased.

The third type of gameplay involves the use of guns. Or not. Because for the most part, the game doesn't actually want you to use them. Taking on multiple enemies, even using the disarm and slow-time moves, couldn't be more dangerous without doing it nude. When you do get your hands on a weapon, they're all pleasingly thunderous - DICE are shooter experts, after all - but also something of an arse to aim. And that clumsiness seems like a deliberate design decision, because you're meant to feel vulnerable and hunted, not like some pretty Eurasian version of Jason Statham. But just as you're thinking Mirror's Edge wants you to cancel your Soldier Of Fortune subscription, it throws in a couple of sections in which you have to shoot your way to safety. Inevitably these feel less special than the free-running stuff, but do provide a welcome change of pace - especially given that too much of







Orange Box Does future fascists better than anyone, and the spatial puzzles and the space, in Portal will give our hrains a workout. **VERDICT 9**

Creed Stunning sense of scale, and stylish art design, undone by repetitive mission structure. Like Mirror's Edge, the is superb too

VERDICT 8

being chased leaves you shaking like a washing machine full of coffee.

Honestly, she fell

The biggest design problem DICE's team had to overcome, though, was making the game hard without it becoming all sorts of frustrating. Their fix is to make the detection window in which Faith can grab hold of the scenery sufficiently forgiving. And for the most part it works. There's a coherent internal logic that lets you know what she can reach and what she can't. But, when it does occasionally break down - in particular with the three-button 180° wall-run/jump, which is exactly as hard to do as it sounds tempers fray fast. A couple of times I ended up attempting the same sequence 20+ times. The checkpoints are well-placed, but that's small consolation when you're plummeting hundreds of feet towards the kiss of cold near-future concrete. And the mood isn't lightened by the sound of Faith's shins snapping like a wet wicker chair being stamped on by Godzilla. During those moments I said some things about her that aren't suitable for a family magazine. They're probably not suitable for the kind of magazine that comes sealed in black plastic. But my treacherous thumbs

The bottom line is this: vou've never played anything like Mirror's Edge. It's a genuine original. When

were as much to blame.



Name Nathan Ditum Angle Very patient man

Mirror's Edge is amazing, and though I can totally see why it could frustrate, I didn't really get angry with it. I love it like a mean pretty girl, and just assume everything that goes wrong between us is my fault. Anyone who's enjoyed Tomb Raider despite Lara's slippy finger moments will love the challenge of the Edge's tougher leaps, even if they can be punishing

Best for...

it's good – like when you're soaring between two rooftop cranes, pigeons scattering and traffic thrumming below, or dashing between roaming sniper laser sights, breaking into an enormous needle-shaped skyscraper - it's a total rush. And even when it's not quite so good, when you can't work out how to get through a particularly tricky section, the compulsion to keep trying remains strong. There's no online mode, and it's comparatively short at around eight to ten hours, but there are multiple routes through the levels and the chance to shave seconds off your speed-run times make the game plenty replayable.

> (Expect to see some incredible videos of players demolishing the levels in

one unbroken run on YouTube.) So DICE, then: Not idiots. But there's a case for saying anyone who doesn't at least try Mirror's Edge is. Tim Clark









14.11.08
THERE'S NO TURNING BACK

"The Future of PS3 starts here"

PlayStation of Official Magazine - UK







PLAYSTATION 3



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reviewPS3

Bioshock



Unfathomable brilliance

Bioshock



Mr Bubbles surfaces on PS3 at last

nother 10/10 for Bioshock, is it? Released last August on 360, this atmospheric first-person shooter swept along on a tide of critical acclaim that ran from merely ecstatic to raving There Will Be Blood-style testifying. It finally comes to PS3 boasting a monumental 96 score on Metacritic. Happily, it also arrives with a new Survivor difficulty setting, Trophies and, post-release, a series of downloadable, standalone challenge rooms. And while nothing here should have 360 veterans rinsing their wallets again, it does mean that, along with graphical polish, this is the definitive Bioshock. So good things do come to those who wait.

Genius, how?

What makes Bioshock essential is a once-in-a-generation, triple lightning strike of character, freedom and sound. That's right, sound. The game's richness, complexity and formidable emotional

Devtalk



"We've up-rezzed a lot of videos that we couldn't afford to on 360 because of space limitations. So we've taken advantage of the power of Blu-ray."

Carlos Cuello
Senior programmer, 2K Marin

impact all spring from combinations of these three elements. And that the quality scarcely falters over some 15+ hours of gameplay makes the achievement all the more impressive.

Bioshock's character is so consistently expressed at every turn as to be almost unbearable at times, and central to this is the design of Rapture, the game's ruined underwater city setting. Much has been made of Bioshock's twisting plot - and while not nearly as clever as you might have been led to believe, following the stranded protagonist's journey through the city is gripping. But the real story here is Rapture's fall from grace, from Art Deco-inspired utopian experiment to leaking ruin, populated by corpses and the mutated remains of its hand-picked populace of thinkers, scientists, artists and pioneers. It's a story you uncover bit by bit as the city reveals its shattered opulence – the overgrown vacation area of Arcadia, the blood-streaked marquees



of Rapture's fun palace, Fort Frolic, its desolate Metro system. But it's also in the ingenious mechanisms that speak volumes of Rapture's heyday long-since obliterated by a savage civil war. The automated gun turrets, built on carved wooden office chairs from scavenged parts; the tin-can casing of your grenade launcher; the jarring gaudiness and jingles of the various vending machines that dole out everything from snack bars to napalm and proximity mines; the 'can-do' optimism of the municipal posters and public service tapes that refuses to flag even as they begin to talk of curfews and a shoot-to-kill policy for vandals. Even the game's enemies, the self-mutated citizens called splicers, wear the tattered remnants of their former glad rags and official uniforms. Altogether it's an amazing environment to inhabit, with everything compelling you to discover the source of Rapture's ruin.

Bioshock's use of sound, too, really is

Five weird things to see



BIG DADDY BODYGUARD

The Daddies are the lumbering protectors of the Little Sisters. Max out the Hypnotize Plasmid and you can have a pair of the idiot behemoths as backup.



HACKING MINI-GAMES

Inspired by ancient Amiga puzzler Pipe Mania, Bioshock's hacking mini-game tasks you with building a pipeline by swapping components spread across a gric



INSECT SWARM PLASMID

For sheer brilliance, you can't beat hundreds of bees instantly erupting from pustules in your arm and attacking enemies in buzzing clouds of death.



AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Take candid photos of splicer mutants with your research camera and you can learn their weaknesses, making your attac more powerful.



SAVING LITTLE SISTERS

Sure, you can kill the spooky Little Sisters, but saving them won't whittle away at what remains of your soul, and it eventually nets you a much bigger reward...



■ The ruined underwater city of Rapture is Bioshock's biggest draw by far. It's incredible.



Plasmids are gene-based power-ups that give your body incredible skills and abilities.

exemplary, working every bit as hard as the graphics to keep you anchored in the game, subtly informing you of threats and treats wherever you go. Stop at any point, listen, and you'll hear nearby splicers bickering through now irrelevant domestic scenarios, the angelic tones and low, moaning counterpoint of Little Sisters and their behemoth Big Daddy bodyguards as they harvest precious genetic essence from corpses.

Diaries of the dead

You'll also hear the sea encroaching on the city – all groaning girders and gushing water – the plink, plink, whirr of security cameras and a wealth of other sonic clues and pointers. Dotted around the city are abandoned audio diaries from its (mostly dead) inhabitants. And it's through these that much of Rapture's tragic corruption plays out. Touching, informative and sinister, they cleverly layer the game's shifting tasks and combat with context and significance.

But it's the freedom Bioshock affords you to fight Rapture's aggressors by



Trophies



IronySnap Sander
Cohen's corpse



Sister saviour
Rescue all the
Little Sisters



Toaster in tubElectrify water to zap enemies.

"It's a triple lightning strike of character, freedom and sound."

combining traditional weaponry with a series of inspired genetic 'hacks' that really nails the game's classic status. Called Plasmids, these upgradeable bio weapons imbue your body with skills that range from electrical, fire and ice attacks to telekinesis, decoy projection, improved mechanism hacking skills, and even the ability to spawn angry swarms of bees. Combining Plasmids to take out splicers in clever ways rapidly becomes an obsession. Before long, you're setting fire to a straggling splicer, hitting him with the Enrage Plasmid and watching as he attacks his compatriots, **PlayStation** setting them ablaze too. Or peppering a bin with

he attacks his compatriots, setting them ablaze too. Or peppering a bin with sticky proximity mines before using the Telekinesis Plasmid to hurl it at a lumbering Big Daddy. Freezing religious

zealots before shattering them into shards with hurled Bibles has a certain irony to it, as does herding splicers with the napalm-equipped Chemical Thrower towards soothing water, only to juice it with your Electrobolt Plasmid, frying the lot. No doubt you'll find your favourites too. The ultimate stroke of genius? Even Bioshock's default weapon, the wrench, feels reliable in a pinch. Not that this should stop you from maxing it out with Combat Gene Tonics, of course.

And so to Bioshock's all-important score. It boils down to one

question: since its original release, has any shooter come close to Bioshock's inventiveness, narrative flair and soup-to-nuts playability? You know the answer to that already,

right? Paul Fitzpatrick





reviewPS3 Tomb Raider Underworld

Timeline Tomb Raider series highlights

Tomb Raider PS1 e series debut saw the birth of an icon and was praised for its revolutionary graphics

'Archaeologist' became a popular career choice.

Tomb Raider II PS1

Number two added vehicles, and launched Lara into the spotlight she appeared on the cover of The Face and in U2's Popmart Tour.



he same basic formula but worthy of a place here because it was nowhere near as bad as the PS2 debacle, Angel Of Darkness



Tomb Raider Legend PS2 Introduced the honey-tongued Spooks star Keeley Hawes as Lara's ne

oice actress



Tomb Raider Anniversary PS2 A remake of the first game, it took the original storyline and puzzles and made them bigger nd prettier.



■ Swimsuit Lara has special yellow stripes, which make her look a bit like a police cordon...



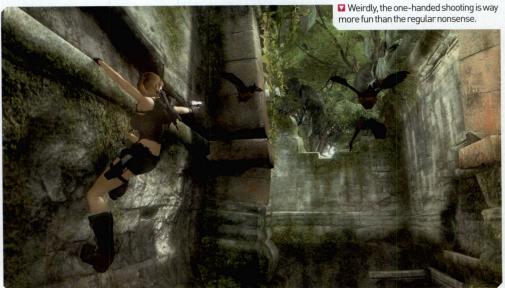




Unfortunately police cordon fashion does little to protect against fire, or indeed bullets.

creatures she does meet - panthers! spiders! yetis! - are all much more eager to kill her than her human foes. Even the bugs will take a bite out of you if you get too close. Not only is it more satisfying killing massive beasts that actually fight back, but it gives you an excuse to see Lara at her best - leaping around, flipping and roundhouse-kicking tigers in the face. Stay down, stripey!

And the locations give you plenty of room to show off in. The scale, from enormous temples in Thailand to the high ceilings and cavernous rooms of the





■ Shooting animals – yes, it's still a bit cruel, but this time the tigers definitely started it.

vaults beneath the now-ruined Croft Manor, is enormous. And it all looks so detailed and vivid. In the jungles parrots flee when you approach; under the sea jellyfish hang in the water like fancy lampshades. The size of the levels may be intimidating at first, but the puzzles make sure you always have something to do, and there's minimal back-tracking. With Lara's jumping, climbing and swimming skills, and a grapple hook that's for yanking levers as much as getting around, every new section gives you a knew way to show off. The game doesn't quite give you Assassin's Creed-style freedom to crawl all over the scenery, but the cleverly designed environments and Lara's flowing moves give you the impression that you can go anywhere and do anything. It's how exploration should feel.



Name Nathan Ditum Angle Acrobat fanatic

but then it's pretty much identical to the shooting in Anniversary, and that was hailed as a big return to form. The key thing is that what the series is *really* all about – the wall-climbing, pole-spinning gymnastics – is back in full force, along with a happily set-pieces. It's not breaking any new ground, but it is a load of fan-pleasing fun.

Best for...

Fans impatient for Uncharted 2

Down Mexico way

The Mayan level a few hours in is a perfect example of the new immense design. In an open arena you have to take on panthers, jump deadly pits of spikes on Lara's motorbike, and then race into the huge fiery temple that erupts from the ground. Wow. Inside you have to battle giant spiders and undead warriors to make it to the Midgard Serpent - a hall that hides one of Thor's treasures, which grants Lara the power to move giant structures and is essential for finding mummy dearest. Oh, and the whole place is filled with deadly magical water - it looks like a shimmering Art Deco

What you do in... Underworld

R% Foraetting where you parked your motorbike. If was by a rock, right? 13% Donating money to Greenpeace to offset your guilt 17% Trying a jump 235

a hidden grapple ring.

7% Having nightmares about the cargo ship shoot-out. 33% Scrambling over the landscape like a monkey. A beautiful, busty monkey.

> 22% Watching Lara's corpse jerk about like a sex doll in an earthquake.





Say what you like about the shooting – we did – the acrobatics are still first rate.



PlayStation

yourself one serious thrill ride.

There's built-in help to make sure you don't get totally stuck in all the brain ache, though. No matter how tough the puzzles get your Field Assistance is always there to drop hints or, if you're really desperate, blurt out a solution. It's a welcome addition. Less successful are the treasures you can collect from smashed pots. The only reward for all the bother of hunting out secret areas and risking your life is watching your total mount up in your inventory. It's all very well having collectibles, but we'd much rather have had Trophies, which are annoyingly absent. Mind you, for Lara's next adventure developer Crystal Dynamics should definitely work on the gun battles before it starts on the silverware. Minor annoyances are forgivable, but the embarrassing

show of Al ineptitude early on may be enough to prevent some people from ever getting to the really hardcore adventuring.

But trust us, it is worth gritting your teeth and blasting your way though the blips. Running around robbing ancient artefacts, desecrating temples and cracking intense puzzles is just as satisfying as ever, and feels like vintage Tomb Raider through and through. The series certainly has stiff

competition these days, but the sheer size and scale of Underworld makes this a strong PS3 debut for Little Miss Puzzley.

Rachel Weber



OSHOCK

www.bioshockgame.com



reviewPS3 Motorstorm Pacific Rift

☐ Pacific Rift relocates the original Motorstorm's multi-class racing to a new tropical island setting.



Part-time lava

Motorstorm Pacific Rift

It's rush hour on the volcano and everyone's angry

he best thing about Pacific Rift is losing. Not actually failing the race, just not being first. It puts you in the heart of the action. Cars smashing into each other, wreckage pin-wheeling across your windscreen and rivals soaring overhead to thump down on the track in front of you.



least because of a new shunt move that enables you to violently sideswipe opponents and send them careening into the nearest rock. Remember the bit in Return Of The Jedi where Luke and Leia are chasing Vader's finest on speeder bikes through the forest of Endor? It's fast, twitchy and full of high-velocity face-meets-tree incidents. When you're locked in the pack, jostling for position, that's exactly what Pacific Rift feels like. Compared to the gladiatorial battling required to reach first place, taking the lead is an anticlimax - just you, trying not to crash, until you reach the finish line.

Crash course

Evolution has obviously realised that violent confrontation is what made the original Motorstorm great and has capitalised on it. Tracks are a far more complicated mix of twisted intersecting paths and shortcuts that positively



encourage smashing through the opposition to reach victory. What route you take depends on your vehicle. Lighter, faster rides like bikes and buggies can take precarious high roads but can be totalled by the slightest impact. Lorries, meanwhile, stay low, purposefully smashing through obstacles and opposing vehicles alike. It's a shame things aren't more balanced, though. Buggies and bikes are the only real option if you consistently want to win. Heavier vehicles - including the new but uninspiring monster trucks - are little more than blundering, overweight curiosities to be ditched as soon as the novelty wears off.

PlayStation. Official Magazil

Movies





Events are split into Earth, Water, Air and Fire, each concentrating on a different area of the new island location. Earth is most like 'old' Motorstorm with muddy, rockstrewn tracks. Air is filled with jumps, ramps and drops while Fire throws in lava, and Water - well, you get the idea. The latter two introduce some interesting tactics because your ability to speed boost is limited by temperature - you can use it as much as you want providing you don't overheat explosively. As you'd expect, lava increases the heat in certain areas of the track, meaning you have less boost to play with, while water cools your ride, enabling you to boost for longer. Smaller vehicles can get bogged down in deep water, however, so you can't plunge into every puddle you see.

Morale boost

If boost was just about hammering it then these environmental effects wouldn't be quite so PlayStation. important. But actually it's invaluable for cornering;

a well-placed thrust as your back end swings out enables you to skid through turns at impossible angles while the aggressive side-shunt move also uses boost. It means you're constantly watching the temperature gauge, and anything that affects it, and making tactical decisions holding back on the straights to make a tricky corner later, or to smash an opponent into a tree.

There are a few issues: dense, cluttered tracks can occasionally be hard to read while the generally responsive physics occasionally lurch into floaty balloon territory. You'll also find some of the larger vehicles get in front of the camera briefly when they're on your tail. Infuriating when they clear out to reveal - ta-da! - an unavoidable crash. There's also the feeling that this is a continuation rather than an advancement for the series. The next instalment will need to introduce new tricks to keep things fresh. But overall this remains superb arcade racing. Not fussy like GT or

exhaustively varied like Grid, just simple, metal-crunching competition that delivers tons of reckless fun.

Leon Hurley

BluMovies

HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



Reservoir Dogs

Director Quentin Tarantino Starring Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth ETA Out now









Band Of Brothers

Director Various Starring Damian Lewis, Donnie Wahlberg ETA Out now

Post-Private Ryan TV drama, created by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, that follows a company of American GIs after the D-Day landings. Pairing the intensity of Ryan with the dramatic sophistication only possible over hours of viewing, Brothers is essential.





sharp and wry as tech billionaire turned chrome-plated crusader Tony

Stark, but it's also thanks to a plot that ditches the schmaltz for action.

reviewPS3

PlayStation Official Magazine UK

Far Cry 2



worn vibe throughout. Forget muscled







Make friends with the mercs you meet and they A friend in need is... a massive risk to your health.



who can raise the alarm from miles tackle missions from any angle, on a hardware. The only 'right way' is the one singling out people who stray from the base head-on is never going to end well. An endlessly satisfying tactic is to distract

for example. Sometimes they behave



Castlist

The target



The good samaritan



The employer



 There are plenty of machine gun nests scattered around, but it's not a wise choice of

say, or twitching between 'attack' and calm'. But it's occasional, far from deal aren't so 'special' to care that much.

is that everyone wants to kill you. Even confrontation after another when all you irksome. Most of your targets think

Map making

Far Cry 2's brilliant editor lets you make your own multiplayer levels.



GETTING STARTED

To begin with you get a blank environment The tools menu lets you add objects and shape the terrain however you want.



WORK THE LAND

You can raise and lower the landscape easily as well as add 'noise' to make rough areas.



ACCESSORISE

and buildings. You can also change the weather and time of day to add atmosphere.



ADMIRE YOUR EFFORTS

Hit saler and you can drop into the map instantly and wander around to see if it works. Not happy with something? Hit 🚃 to re-edit.

washed out Global Hypercolour shirts

Have gun, will travel

mission structure is completely open.

review PS3

Far Cry 2







extra missions, or rescue you if you get hurt. You can betray them, save them, or even put them out of their misery if they get injured. "Thanks, Frank – sob – I couldn't have done it without you..."

Chick-chack.

Creeping through the jungle, watching the mottled shadows of leaves play over the ground, or seeing sunbeams play through the canopy is ridiculously atmospheric and pretty. Generally, the environment is astounding, despite slight infidelities – middle-distance pop-up, a clear division between close-range detail and bland distant textures. There are also incredibly limited save points and a restrictive fast travel system (buses – it makes you catch buses). Driving, boating or, if you're lucky, gliding everywhere can feel cathartic but it takes ages. Die and

▲ Buddies can offer alternate solutions to objectives. You'll have to help them in return though Or kill them.





▲ Not all the mercs are big, hairy men. The ladies are well represented and just as lethal.



▲ Far Cry 2 is like being in a remake of The Wild Geese, and about as politically correct.

"Along with Mirror's Edge, Bioshock and Fallout 3, this is an essential chapter in a new wave of shooters."

PlayStation.

you have to do it all again. The navigation system isn't too friendly either. Flicking between GPS and a map, trying to get your bearings, is realistic but about as much fun as getting lost for real. Mission-specific road signs are highlighted which helps, but the ability to set waypoints would have been a hure help.

But these things pale compared to the achievement of creating such a convincing setting. Fire spreading chaotically, wind rustling the foliage, bullets tearing branches from trees. Whatever

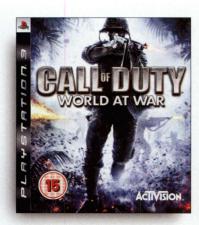
happens you'll believe it's a real world and a fantastic setting for the action. It's not as dense or as varied as, say, Oblivion – you'll go somewhere, kill everyone, every mission – but it's utterly convincing and engrossing. The immersion helps make faults more tolerable because they're real world issues (bullet-proof enemies aside). We're in a

massively exciting period for FPS games and, along with contemporaries like Mirror's Edge, Bioshock and Fallout 3, this is an essential chapter in the new wave of shooters.

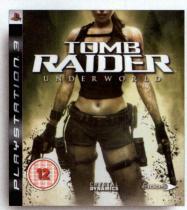
Leon Hurley













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reviewPS3

Midnight Club Los Angeles



Velocity of angels

Midnight Club Los Angeles

Standing on the shoulder of giants and engaging nitrous



TA: Stuck In The Car Edition.'
That's been the harsh synopsis of Midnight Club LA from some cynics. As it turns out they're way off, but there is a comparison to make with Rockstar's other franchise. Trade Burger Shot for Pizza Hut and Los Santos for the real City of Angels, and Midnight Club shares the same anarchic spirit and depiction of urban sprawl as man's greatest playground as GTA does. And as for not getting out of the car – hey baby, this is LA – nobody walks.

Well, that's not strictly true, as the hundreds of panicked (but still alive) participants of my can you run over a pedestrian?' experiment - chosen at random, usually at over 115mph - will attest. Given life and extraordinarily believable movement by the same Rockstar Advanced Game Engine (RAGE) that puts the lead in GTA IV's pencil, LA's skin-saving citizens – and the meticulously detailed city they call home - are proof positive that the developer has successfully rescued the urban racer from a genre landfill groaning with fugly after-market tat and the wannabe tuner culture that was increasingly more Weston-super-Mare than West Coast.

The best side

Don't get me wrong – Midnight Club LA is still up in your grill with pink-slip races, rival crews, and you, the obligatory

newcomer out to make a name for himself. That said, where other street racers vomit ride-pimpin' trinkets and customisation ephemera at you, LA dials down the crazy and focuses on quality over desperate excess. Take the 40 or so rides: from entry-level Mk.1 Golf GTI and Nissan 280Z via classic Dodge Challenger and '71 Lamborghini Miura to Saleen S7 and Ford's cynically brilliant GT (not to mention the game's handful of bikes), every last vehicle is a bona fide object of automotive lust. Customisation options, meanwhile, are usually limited to three or four choices per component, be it clutch, gear kits, air scoops or interior neon. Doesn't seem like much? Trust me, you won't get bored. You could spend ages tinkering in Hollywood Auto's decal and paint shops alone. The benefits of this focused approach are twofold: one, refine your car's mechanics and you'll

What you do in... MCLA





Crashes aren't Burnout mental - but they look every bit as punishing as you'd hope for.



You can even test drive the locked cars. Nice.

The fastest rides

Start saving your shiny dollars



1971 Lamborghini Miura SV

3.9 litre V12

2006 Saleen S7

2006 Ford 61



feel the benefit on the road; and two, it's virtually impossible to spawn a truly gaudy mess that looks like a Mardi Gras float fleeing a hit and run.

I love LA

But dawdling at your Hollywood Auto base is to miss MCLA's real attraction the city itself. As numerous slack-jawed colleagues will testify, Midnight Club's Los Angeles looks almost impossibly real, even at speed. And Rockstar knows it, crash zooming in and out of the entire map from your car with a speed that still makes me wonder how even a machine as powerful as PS3 can manage it. Encompassing an area larger than MC3's three cities put together it feels every bit as alive as GTA IV's Liberty City, with dynamic weather (mostly sunny, admittedly) and a day/night cycle with corresponding traffic flow and roaming

It's possible to power slide bikes in MCLA - not realistic, perhaps, but fun, and that's usually the decider here.



ScorePole Midnight Club L A pulls level with Burnout, and leaves Pro Street standing.

cop cars out to catch the unwary racer for the slightest driving violation. From Santa Monica pier to Hollywood, every landmark, billboard and building is present and correct. Even without a stack of races to be won, you could spend days just exploring, looking for shortcuts, jumps and secret Rockstar barrels.

But race you will, and what with delivery and payback missions (cause minimum and maximum damage, respectively) swelling an array of checkpoint and freestyle races, time trials, pink-slip tournaments, wager and freeway events, there's a good dozen ways to win cash, gain rep and climb the ranks of LA's tuner elite. Better still. combine this variety with the sheer scale and complexity of the map, and



▲ The game map is massive and massively detailed, right down to tags in LA's storm drains.

it'll be a long time before you mothball the Gallardo Spyder and call it a day.

If you're thinking that LA marks Midnight Club's transition to respectable middle age, you'd be wrong. MC3's 'Special Abilities' - Midnight Club speak for EMP pulses, shock waves, invulnerability and slo-mo power-ups return, and while slightly at odds with the pursuit of reality and (relative) restraint elsewhere, they can be vital in tight spots and make multiplayer every bit as gladiatorial as you'd hope. Handling, meanwhile, is generously, entertainingly arcadey without ever feeling floaty or skittish. It enables you to power slide and feel like a drifting god. But abuse that generosity and a boulevard-clipping tail slide will graduate to a costly, crunching spin-out, just like that. Still, hit your stride and the confluence of hard-won experience, favourite ride and the unmistakable kick of nitrous will see you threading through rush-hour traffic at speeds bystanders will scarcely

believe possible. It's at euphoric moments like these that Midnight Club LA leaves its genre trappings far, far behind. Stuck in the car? Doesn't sound so bad, now,

does it? Paul Fitzpatrick



reviewPS3

Dead Space



Bleeding hell

Dead Space

The exact opposite of last year's Live Earth

he circular saw gently moves back are the future of survival horror. A tentacle falls wetly into a pile of giblets.

Dead Space brings a lot to the table, it then saws up the table, dumps your oxygen into space and starts sucking on

your leg. What's great is that it cherrysomething genuinely gripping.

So. You've arrived on the USG part of a repair team sent to sort it out being dressed like a Victorian lightning Ishimura appears to be dead. There's blood on the walls and bodies piled high. Then things take a turn for the worse.

Monsters inc

Dead Space re-ignites many overthe monsters are predictably deformed, appendages you need to slice off to have any hope of killing them. This means that with entertaining regularity, are actually a

la corpse flopping from a duct, a plunders Event Horizon for the ghostly spaceship and coshes Alien for the petal-like opening motion of its grotesque mix of this and Half-Life's rocket engine-loving tentacles. The 'influences' list could almost go on forever, but it's not a complaint. Dead Space squishes it all together with panache.

To the casual observer Dead Space is just another angry man doing bad things from EA – hardly known for its edgy content. It would be easy to be cynical, but this is no family-friendly fudge any more than it's a one-trick gorefest. It's never patronising or dumb. From the ironic wit of the Ishimura's many safety

What you do in... Dead Space 15% Loving the gun that slices either vertically or horizontally. **5%** Reloading boss battles. 55% Cutting

up bodies in the dark. 10% Failing to fully admire the beauty of space because vou're suffocating.

110% Feeling grateful that walk, not run, is the default setting.

5% Wondering why nobody else is dressed

review_{PS3}

Dead Space



▲ Zero-g sections look like the cool bit in 2001 but require plenty of brainthink to negotiate.



A man gets his brains painted on glass by a necrotic mutant baby. He'd have wanted it this way.

signs to the way your two pals can't quite believe the amount of go-here-fix-this missions the suits are giving you, there's a real sense that Dead Space is the creation of people who just love this stuff.

Yet underneath there's a very EA-ish desire to appease. There's a cleverly integrated hint system so the maze of dark metal need never be confusing. Die and your checkpoint is close by, even if you haven't saved. And as lame as it sounds, the menus – transparent 3D displays that exist within the world – are genius. The game is as friendly as its creatures are deadly.

A thousand deaths

Dead Space has been spanked hard with the variety truncheon, so your spooky repairman wanderings are broken up with zero-g problems, boss fights, fixed cannons, arena-style battles, audio logs, weapons upgrades, localised gravity malfunctions, ghosts, tentacle fights, religious lunatics, fire, arcing electricity and a rather smug, mad scientist.

And the weaponry? Bar a plasma rifle that's a clear nod to Aliens, they're not really guns. Many are tools, and rather than taking the increasingly boring pistol, shotgun, rocket launcher route, Dead Space goes for laser, deadly cutting thing, flamethrower, saw, monster-freezing stasis ability. What more could you want? Think hard. A little light shopping?

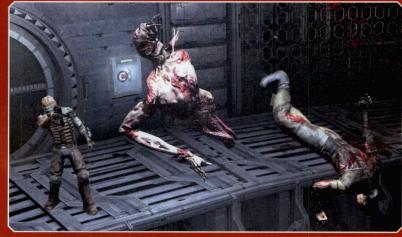
Funny, because suddenly, less than half way in, Dead Space thunders into a massive difficulty spike and you go shopping. Now the various 'Store' terminals become your best friends. It's vital to sell everything you've scavenged and buy ammunition, as events conspire to drain you dry. Once you've acclimatised

Influences How Dead Space nabs from high art and trash culture



Contrived or not, the idea that enemies only go down when you slice their limbs off one by one is awesome.

► Broken bodies floating in the cold deadness of space. It's a party atmosphere, alright.



Play these
Play these
Play tation.2

SILENT
Headington
The Silent Hill
Collection
The most consistently terrifying series on PlayStation bar none.
VERDICT 9

PlayStation.2

Resident Evil 4 Arguably PS2's greatest game, and a revolution for the Resi series. VERDICT 10 from shooter to survival horror it's fine, but it's undeniably an awkward lurch in a mostly smooth experience.

mostly smooth experience.

Boss fights add further lurches
catering, as all boss fights do, for those
who like to crawl toward the winning
strategy through seemingly endless
deaths and reloads. And the physics,
though mostly impressive, leave
strangely massless corpses
more akin to water
balloons joined with
elastic than hulking
chunks of meat. It's
embarrassing to glance

slopping sound? - only to find

you've had a mutant space baby stuck to your shoe like toilet paper for the last 15 minutes. It's a faux pas of no small order.

So, unless you hate brown, gory toilets and machines that need power restoring via distant switches, make sure you drift off into Dead Space. You'll be doing it alone as there's no multiplayer, not even

as there's no multiplayer, not even a token one – that's one tiresome

unwritten rule ejected from the airlock – and a decision that emphasises a desire to go beyond the standard run-and-gun dynamic. And Dead Space definitely goes beyond. **Steve Williams**



reviewPS3

Saints Row 2



Daylight robbery

Saints Row2

Comedy GTA cast-off leaves us cold

ow do you top a game like Saints Row? It's not hard. But developer Volition obviously wanted to make it hard, so it hired Tera Patrick as a producer. She's a porn star. And you know what? Hiring a girl who describes herself as 'the best finisher in the business' – that's the 'making sex with men who look like ex-cons' business – has worked, because after playing Saints Row 2 you're likely to feel confused, ashamed and slightly empty inside.

The chief problem is that the huge city of Stillwater remains oddly sterile, although it is now full to bursting with stuff to break - fences, bins, street furniture and all that. It's certainly fun to smash through, but the fun is limited by vehicles that are deadly dull to drive. Just about everything reaches its (oddly slow) top speed very rapidly, then just sits there droning away and asking little of the player. The smashing is nice but it never feels dangerous or exciting. The original Row's handling was a wrong turn out of 'arcade' and into 'dumb' even before GTA made flat-out city driving so thrillingly tricky, but now it feels positively ancient.



The AI brains are seemingly modelled on porn stars too - Stillwater's finest struggle to do anything other than collapse near you. Perhaps SR2 is a satirical commentary on violent games, revelling in random and excessive attacks only to render them empty and pointless? Or not. The very first thing the game tells you to do is kill an unarmed man who is trying to help you - a doctor. And you really do have to kill an amazing amount of women... If the standard bling-obsessed, self-aggrandising, hip-hopping male 'gangstas' weren't presented as such hateful spanners too, a charge of blanket misogyny would stick easily. To be fair, though, this is a game that degrades everyone. So perhaps it's aimed (with commendable precision) at people who really love hurting things but are, through no fault of their own, cacky-fingered fat heads? It's a knotty one.

Strap-on action

Yet, while the basic experience remains unsatisfying, it's been augmented with all manner of distracting things in the



vein of well, a porn star. There are a great many 'Activities' to seek out, from simple races to the much-touted crap-spraying missions (boring manure truck + dumb cops = no fun), and completing them earns you respect. Not self-respect.

Volition's amusing 'Would You Rather' trailer drew parallels between GTA IV's tiresome bowling/cabaret-going demands and SR2's own ludicrous poo-flinging/insurance-scamming/ shop-robbing activities, neatly skewering one of GTA's more tiresome aspects. But it didn't mention they'd made poothrowing, or whatever activity you choose, as irritatingly necessary as bowling. You're forced to play Activities to earn the 'respect' that opens proper missions. Just as wearying as GTA IV's socialising, then, but without the option to take taxis. On the other hand, SR2 has a useful cruise control that allows you to concentrate on spraying everything with gunfire as you drive. Inevitably, there are bikes, boats, jet skis, planes and attack choppers too, but all suffer from the basic problem of being in Stillwater.

☑ Stillwater is big, but not too pretty and a country mile from clever.





Character creation is fantastic, but he's got every reason to look horrified.

Another big distraction - the main one - is the character creation. It's brilliant and easily the best part of the whole game, and thankfully not limited to a one-shot deal at the start. The Image As Designed shops enable you to change any aspect of your appearance, for a small fee, whenever you want. Everything from age, race, weight and gender can be altered, but what's so impressive is the way it's scaled. Few things are binary, on-off decisions. Even gender is on a sliding scale, blurring over the line from masculine to feminine somewhere in the middle. PlayStation.

Everything from skin to hair colour comes in an amazing array of subtle (and pleasingly unsubtle) varieties, and there are



They can pretend it's dumb on purpose, but what's the excuse for poor physics?

enough skull-sizing options to refute Darwinian theory. It's very user friendly and very funny. It perfectly embodies the sense of chaotic fun the whole game is clearly supposed to, but doesn't.

The rest of it is harsh violence, poor jokes, nice explosions, dreary driving, great soundtrack, co-op and multiplayer for people who think Sarah Palin is a milf, creaky visuals, hateful characters, stupid enemies and a witless obsession with bodily fluid. There's definitely a market for it.

And a porn star is an inspired choice of producer,

because when you get right down to it, if you throw Saints Row 2 50 guid, it will suck.

Steve Williams



This month's overseas action in a nutshell

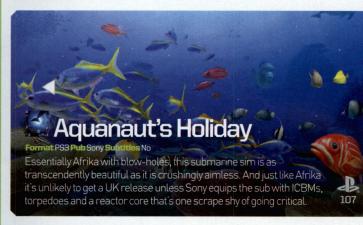


Secret Game: Killer Queen Format PS2 Pub Veti Subtitiles No



While plundering Battle Royale's 'do unspeakable things or die' premise, this adventure adds a gratifyingly paranoid

twist. 13 strangers are each given a playing card and a PDA with a secret assignment on it, none of which involve attending strategy meetings, picking up Dad from the airport or getting semi-skimmed on the way home.





To Love Ru Trouble

Reluctant to be part of an arranged

Format PSP Pub Marvelous Subtitles No

marriage, bikini-wearing, dimension-hopping Princess Lala teleports into teenager Yuuki's bath and decides to marry the lad. Meanwhile, miffed at her rebellious streak Lala's dad sends all his preferred suitors after the pair to try and seduce her and ruin their relationship. Cue 850MB of increasingly filthy, multiple-choice questions.







Remember 11: Love **Game Selection**



Pachi-Slot



War of words

Tom Clancy's EndWar

Global supremacy through shouting at the TV



he last time I played a game using a single button the console had a wood veneer and I still counted my age in half years. Back then I was gunning down blocky, single-colour robots in Berzerk on a mate's Atari 2600. Today, I'm in command of Europe's mechanised, airborne and infantry forces, waging World War 3 on a PS3. But one button? WTF? With PC-based real-time strategy games boasting ever more complex control setups, the guys at Ubisoft Shanghai have taken Tom Clancy's beloved technowar fetish and

built a fully-featured RTS that ramps up your proximity to (and therefore the immediacy of) the conflict, while sacrificing little of the strategic depth. And the success of the game hinges entirely on *voice control*.

Vocal opposition

Not that voice control in military shooters is new, of course. Previously, both Sony's SOCOM, and Ubisoft's own Rainbow Six series enabled you to bark limited commands at your elite warriors over a USB headset. Problem was, ambition

outstripped PS2's tech so that gamers inevitably traded the simplistic commands for pad controls and locker room swearing as special forces imbeciles blinded them with flash bangs for the 20th time that mission. Endwar is different. Its voice control actually works. Flawlessly. Not once in the entire time I played Endwar did I feel tempted to resort to the optional pad controls. And while my men still did some moronic, suicidally reckless things in the heat of battle, it was always because I ordered them to.

Tom Clancy's EndWar









Endwar's premise is vintage Clancy, combining world-wide fuel shortages with a near-future nuke-negating satellite grid to cleverly stoke the fires of conventional global conflict while removing the risk of mutually assured destruction that, otherwise, would have made Endwar a very short game.

■ With its voice control and ground-level point of view, Endwar is real-time strategy for the masses.

Risk assessment

Stepping up for the mother of all global three-ways are America, Russia, and Europe, and each faction's armed forces has unique tactical strengths. The US Joint Strike Force, for example, has superior stealth technology and air-to-ground capabilities. Europe's Enforcer Corps, meanwhile, is a rapid reaction force that excels in urban combat and electronic warfare. Finally, the Russian Spetsnaz Guard Brigade ticks the bear-like national stereotype by being the slow, technologically slapdash

Devtalk



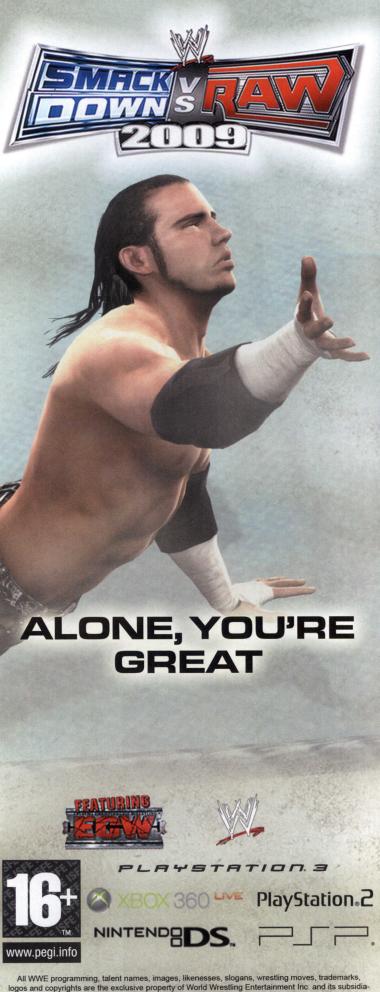
'We thought, 'what can we do with Tom Clancy that hasn't been done before? Simple -World War 3!"

Michael De Plater

but formidably armoured army.

The solo game is divided into two, no-nonsense, sections: a ten-mission acclimatisation to plot, controls and tactics called Prelude To War, and World War 3 itself. Cleverly, Prelude To War also enables you to sample control of all three factions, before asking you to settle on one for the rest of the game. Played out over a global map, each of the 40 linked hot-spots represents a key, strategic location that is fought for in one of four battle types: Conquest, Assault, Raid or Siege. Conquest tasks you with capturing the majority of the map's Uplink Nodes connected to the anti-nuke satellite shield. The objective in Assault is to

annihilate all the enemy's forces, while Raid has you destroying strategically vital buildings that will hobble supply lines and affect your opponent's ability to wage war in neighbouring hotspots. Last of all, Siege forces you to dig in and defend a base/Uplink Node/embassy/hole in the ground from attack until reinforcements arrive. With each battle taking place as a 'turn' on the map, each victory or defeat you score becomes part of the wider war. Better still, take Endwar online and the results of all the games played worldwide each day will be totted up



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▲ Follow your troops into battle and it's hard not to let the sense of power go to your head.





■ Enable Sixaxis (go on) and a flick of the pad will bring up the Sitrep map, showing a tactical overview of the entire battle.

and applied to the global map. The resulting massively multiplayer RTS will see WW3 playing out War Games-style on Ubisoft's servers for years to come. Clever.

Ground war

Endwar's stroke of genius is how it plays out within each self-contained skirmish. Having been briefed on the mission objective and with your starting units selected (two to begin with, but rising to 12 in later missions) you enter the battlefield. Rather than adopting the standard, lofty RTS 'god' view - great for tactical perspective but ruinous for immersion - the game fixes the camera loosely to one of your units at ground level. Swap between units and your view swoops to its destination in a way

that's instantly

familiar to anyone



who's experienced Battlefield 2: Modern Combat's flashy 'hotswapping' feature.

By far the hardest part of using

voice control is overriding years of disappointment with similar systems and simply accepting that it won't let you down. Adopting a no-brainer who/what/where command structure you can play armchair general until you're hoarse. If you want Unit One (your battle-hardened engineers) to perform a blitzkrieg-style attack on Uplink Node 'Gamma', for example, you simply press and hold (12) and say, "Unit One secure Gamma." Wherever Unit One is, its

commander

will acknowledge the order

and it'll move out,



Endwar is best against human opponents but even offline the AI is sharper than normal.



■ The detail on show is impressive, and as a result you feel part of the action at all times.

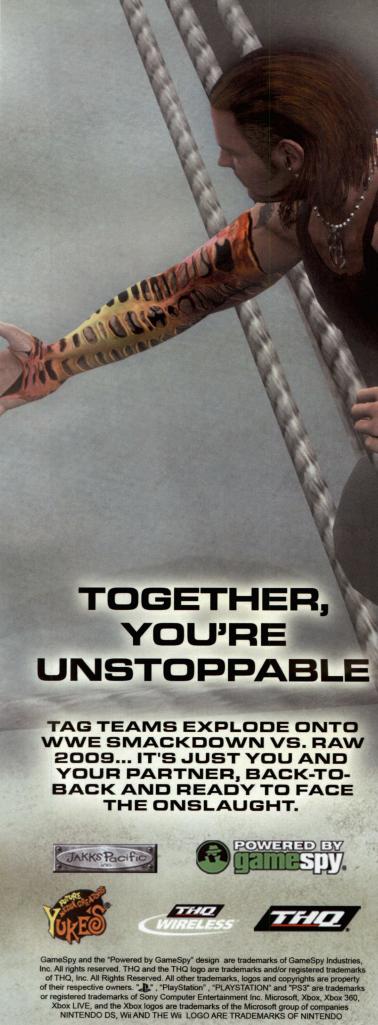
intelligently engaging any enemies it comes across en-route but staying focused on its objective. Saying "Unit One, camera" will enable you to check in on their progress. The system is simple, but it enables you to carry out increasingly complex commands. So, before long, you'll be micro-managing multiple units, combining them into Control Groups, transporting infantry to distant waypoints, deploying automated drones from your Command Vehicle and positioning artillery units to hammer the enemy's rearguard, all without manually accessing a single menu or option screen. Even the unit upgrade system is beautifully simple - you get six basic classes of unit (two infantry, chopper gunships, tanks, transport and artillery) plus a PlayStation.

and artillery) plus a command vehicle. However, each of these can be upgraded with better weaponry, accuracy, offensive or defensive capabilities etc, meaning that each unit can be personalised to your tactical requirements – powerful body armour to cope with General Fitzpatrick's preference for suicidal charges at the enemy? Check!

What voice control does is make gameplay almost as fast as your ability to conjure an order in your mind. And the tech really is up to the job of recognising multiple orders in rapid succession. The resulting experience is fast, intuitive, exciting and fun - basically everything RTS games don't tend to be. If there's one reservation about Endwar it's that, offline and playing against AI opponents, victories will inevitably begin to feel a little hollow. Play against other people online, however, and Endwar's pleasures are only limited by the

> callous deviousness of the human mind. See you on the nets, then? Last one to Moscow is a freedom-hating surrender monkey...

Paul Fitzpatrick



reviewPS3 Valkyria Chronicles





Tanks are brutally powerful, but you must keep an engineer handy to repair them after battles.



■ The game's framing device is a book, with each panel representing a cut-scene or battle.

Art of war

Valkyria Chronicles

Art attack, only with real attacking

laying Valkyria Chronicles is bit like seeing a watercolour painting come to life, and then try really hard to blow itself to death again. Set in a parallel universe Europe, the game's cel-shaded graphics create lush, brushstroke landscapes and beautifully detailed characters that are unlike anything else on PS3.

But like the pretty, college-bound girls in high school, Valkyria has a frustrating 'look, but don't touch' policy, forcing you to sit through seemingly endless cut-scenes before you get to play. The game is presented as a book, with every page filled with graphic novel-style panels, and each of these linking to either a chunk of plot exposition or a playable battle. At the game's frustrating worst I played through two whole 'pages' and sat through a total of eight movies versus just one hands-on dust up. It's all the more annoying because the combat is really good - both refreshingly original and tactically challenging.

A bit of context first, though. It's the 1930s and Europe is at war. You are tank commander Welkin, charged with leading the soldiers of Squad 7 into battle. But before you can fire a single shell, choosing and manoeuvring your soldiers into positions that will work with their strengths is crucial to victory.

It's all based on a rock/paper/scissors



Final Fantasy

A classic tactical affair that, while graphically

old-skool, is the heavyweight champion

VERDICT 10

Caught in the open The battlefields are set up for strategising, too. Ranging from deserts crisscrossed by trenches to dense woodland and rustic villages, each one has a different mix of environmental features - crucial cover, high vantage points, and weak walls to ram through in your tank (although that's not always so

much about tactics as it about fun). The fighting itself is split into two modes. Command mode displays a map of the battlefield, littered with unit markers representing troops from both sides. Once you've selected an allied marker to move, you'll launch Target mode, which thrusts PlayStation. you into the boots of your

forces on the ground. You're free to move whenever you please, although exactly how far is dictated by each unit's movement stat. The



important thing is that, unlike most tactical RPGs, Valkyria enables you to see the battle unfold from an intimate perspective. So when you stray into an enemy's range and engage in a firefight, or watch as enemy troops advance on a prone ally during their attack phase, you'll genuinely tense up and pray for a misfire. On the flip side going on the offensive yourself feels gratifyingly like playing a first-person shooter, with you staring through your crosshairs, picking the best target and giving yourself an imaginary high five when your boys score a headshot.

It's a lively way to breathe new life into RPG battles, which are often ugly and hard to follow. Yes, the cut-scenes can be a drag, but the quality of the

> combat combined with the fact that the game is really pretty makes this easier to bear. Other tactical RPGs take note: the art of war has rarely looked this good or played so

well Kim Richards

Baja: Edge Of Control/Music



Written off

Edge Of Control

Driving digital entertainment to new lows

ome of the races in this Motorstorm wannabe last for three hours. Three hours! That would feel like an eternity even if Baja was fun, fast and pretty. It's absolutely none of those things - and putting up with the crippled handling. obvious glitches and raw looks for that amount of time surely qualifies as some kind of self-harming.

Where are the shiny cars? The rugged but perfectly rendered tracks? The textures? (Oh God, the textures.) The whole thing looks so jagged and deeply, deeply brown that you can't help but wonder if you've accidentally loaded a PS1 game. And the insultingly sparse set dressing you do find - the odd tyre, a sad, lonely cone - has a habit of levitating after a crash, as if David Copperfield was hiding behind a nearby mudflat.

Mean machines

The good news is that you won't notice the dodgy looks once you start racing, because you'll be too busy shouting at the [cough] gameplay. None of the vehicles, from the guad bikes to the big trophy trucks, ever work their way up to PlayStation. the type of warp speeds offered by Motorstorm - which was a launch game, for chrissakes. And even if you do manage





□ Damaged car? You could call the repair helicopter, but it'll only prolong the agony.

to work out some kind of relationship with the DUI-quality handling, accidentally cut even the tiniest corner and you're given a massive time penalty. It scuppers all chances of a win so you're soon playing it safe in every race, chugging along in the centre of the track like a nervous learner driver

If there were no other racers on PS3, or indeed on the planet, buying this would still be a mistake, but with

the likes of Dirt already out there, and Motorstorm: Pacific Rift on the horizon, spending money on Baja would be nothing short of madness. Rachel Weber



Essential tunes to download this month

MTA Paper Planes Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

London art student turned global pop provocateur Maya Arulpragasam's back with Paper Planes. Smart ghetto-pop stuffed full of cracking gunshots, ringing cash registers, and a kiddie chorus pieced together on the streets of Brixton, myspace.com/mia



Gurning Florida metal contenders inspired by Slayer, Iron Maiden and, going on the title of this, their third album, feudal Japan. 11 tracks of slamming kickdrums, super-widdly guitars and songs called things like Torn Between Scylla And Charybdis should sort out the true metallers from the Top Shop T-shirts. myspace.com/trivium



The Ting Tings Be The One

Boy-girl duo continue their march to total chart domination with this fresh single plucked from We Started Nothing. Displaying little of the lipstick feistiness exhibited on Shut Up And Let Me Go, Be The One is innocent, '80s-tinged electro-pop that suggests this band might have promise beyond the sass. myspace.com/thetingtings





THQ's superstar wrestles back its crown

since the demise of WCW in 2001, wrestling fans have moaned that lack of competition has gradually turned WWE stale. Certainly it's been true of the once-incomparable series of Smackdown games, which peaked with the outstanding WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2006. Or so we thought. The debut of TNA Impact – which scored 7/10 in OPM last month – has caused developer Yuke's to rise to the challenge and produce its best game in three years.

There's no single reason for this successful turnaround. It's more down to a game-wide raft of improvements, in the ring especially. Less focus has been placed on gimmicks (like SVR 2008's misguided character styles) and more on nailing the basics, and then building from there. Controls feel more responsive than ever, reversals have been simplified, on-screen prompts are clear (a dream for newbies) and the AI is much less robotic and endlessly punishing than in previous years.

New outside-the-ring camera angles (focusing in close on the wrestlers, just like on TV) add to the authenticity, and the



TNA Impact
Shallow but stylish
wrestler from WWE's
biggest rival, starring
Kurt Angle and Sting.
VERDICT 7



Soulcalibur IV
Hands-down the best
fighter on PS3, with vast
customisation options
and superb shellacking.
VERDICT 9

reworking of tag-team matches to incorporate hot tags and better team play (the co-op AI really is excellent here) has really upped the ante in the multigrappler bouts. Matches still don't play out exactly like 'the real thing' – and how can they, when this is a choreographed industry? – but the fighting is constantly fast and fun. It's great stuff.

Mania-bound

The main criticism of Smackdown Vs Raw in recent years has been its take on the franchise modes offered by genuine sports games. They've had a number of different guises, from season mode to WWE 24/7 – but every one has been such a mish-mash of disjointed ideas that they've never really worked. Finally, this year, Yuke's has turned it around with the moreish and outstanding Road To Wrestlemania mode.

There are six paths you can take, playing as specific superstars (CM Punk, John Cena, Triple H, Undertaker, Chris Jericho, or the team of Rey Mysterio and Batista) and while that may sound like a limited selection, less is very much more.



Each storyline takes in 12 weeks' worth of TV shows plus the Royal Rumble, No Way Out and Wrestlemania pay-per-view events, and plays out with all the twists and turns you see on WWE each week. There's little branching or choice, but there doesn't need to be – cut-scenes and commentary are both well paced and scripted so you're continually drawn towards the next week.

The unlocking system in this mode is superb, too. Naturally, completing one entire storyline gets you something big – finishing the Mysterio/Batista road earns you Mr McMahon as a playable character, for example – but it's the optional goals, like unlocking the delicious Layla by beating Big Daddy V with CM Punk in under two and a half minutes, that make it even more compelling. With each storyline taking



▲ Maria and Michelle McCool are among the selection of Divas on offer. Would, would.

"With a Create-A-PPV mode this would be in 9/10 territory."

two to three hours to complete on standard difficulty, there's plenty to be found in this mode alone.

Backstage extras

For those still wanting more, there's also a more basic career mode where you can play as any character, working towards winning a specific belt by racking up victories. Match types are, as always, plentiful, and the new Inferno Match - win by slinging your opponent over the rope into 300-degree flames surrounding the ring, setting their backside aflame - is silly, yet undeniably funny. Throw in the returning tournaments, like King Of PlayStation. The Ring and Beat The Clock Sprint (fastest man to win a match gets a title shot), and there's stacks to do, although the

continuing exclusion of Create-A-PPV mode (the clear highlight of PS2 Smackdowns) remains totally baffling. With that, this would be pushing into 9/10 territory.

Even without it, it's a huge return to form. It's almost an afterthought to say so these days, but the character models look better than ever (we sort of fancy the virtual Kelly Kelly more than the real one). while the roster feels far more current than it has in the recent games. Yuke's deserves great credit for breathing new life into a franchise that, quite frankly, we'd all but given up on. The champ is back on top - and with TNA on its

> tail and Legends Of Wrestlemania on the

way, 2009 suddenly looks set to be a big year for grap games.

Ben Wilson



Straight to bargain hin

With Nathan Ditum



At least Baroque isn't as shamelessly derivative as most of the stuff that ends up in this column - no, Baroque is horrid and confusing in ways no one would want to copy. Like the fact it starts in a blood-skied netherland with your amnesiac hero surrounded by antlered women, Francis Bacon-style mutations and flying robot fish (three bullet points for the back of the box right there). It looks like all the developer's resources went into making it 'different' rather than

'playable' - there's a handful of pixels shared out among the crayon-basic character models and a draw distance that feels like you're carrying a candle into an impenetrable darkness. Which, after five minutes with the game, you'll begin to realise we all are, in a way. Thanks, Baroque!

The thing about PDC World Championship Darts is that it's actually really, really good - like, easily the best in its field. The problem is that its field is being a PSP game about darts. It's like being the best at driving carefully in the wet, or drywalling (and even that's a little bit glamorous, because sometimes being good at DIY will get you laid). It occupies such a tedious shed of expertise that the quality of it just makes you sadder. Proper skill and precision is required to master the analogue-nub throwing



controls, but the really impressive (and depressing) thing about it is how well it's presented. The pale, flabby character models look like they've been dug up by Satan for one last game of arrows, and the arenas reek with the prison mix of stale Rothmans and undiagnosed emphysema.



Wait, really? Pipe Mania on PSP? I don't want to smash up old stuff just because it's old (that would make family get-togethers awkward) but the idea that a game which first appeared on audio cassette can be released with essentially no changes 20 years on and cost real money (£20. £20!) is clearly all wrong. Plus, having got used to the hacking mini-game version of Pipe Mania in Bioshock, the fact that here you still have to find a use for every piece of tubing the game gives you (so you end up

weaving criminally inefficient and complicated webs of piping) has all the absurd logic of an anxious Kafka-esque nightmare. What kind of organisation refuses to let you simply order the right parts for the job?

Abomination of the month

Worst game this month is Premier Manager 09, - the worst football management game I've ever played. It has the basics right – there's a bewildering depth of options and sub-menus -



enough to trigger a panic attack in the weak - but it becomes clear pretty quickly that it's all for show. There's a second-long pause every time you switch screens (and there are hundreds), the squad line-ups and team managers are all out of date and the licensing is non-existent. Instead of real badges – or even decent pretend ones like in PES – there are blobs of colour vaguely approximating the shape of the real thing. It's like trying to play toy soldiers with cornflakes or bits of rock – functional if you have enough imagination; a shoddy substitute for the real thing if you don't.



review_{PS3}

Disgaea 3 Absence Of Justice





■ The script is utterly off the wall, characters are either mildly eccentric or plain crazy.



that'll push your strategies for big XP rewards.



Demonic battler



Disgaea 3 Absence Of Justice

A-forthis school-based J-RPG

here's some stuff you need to know about before we get stuck into Disgaea 3. It's brilliant, for a start, but it's deeply Japanese and full of odd tongue-in-cheek humour that takes some serious acclimatisation. All of which is made absolutely apparent during the first few minutes of Absence Of Justice, when you're thrown into battle with the game's final boss - a demon who is so large you fit in the palm of his massive hand and have to attack his fingers. Oh yeah, and one other thing: he's also your dad.

So why are you attacking the old man? And how come he's a massive demon? Because 'vou' in this case means Mao, the wild-haired top student at Disgaea 3's Maritsu Evil Academy (a kind of demon



university) and your dad has trashed your SlayStation Portable. Now you're super mad and on a mission to take pops' place as the Academy's Overlord, in-between ditching classes and terrorising the wide-eved freshers.

The university functions as a hub world, leading to a classroom where you can create new characters and interact

with your classmates. How you influence your fellow students has an impact later in combat. You can persuade other characters to be friends, for instance, then pair up with them during fights to increase their attack power, or you can use bribery and threats to convince the student body to pass motions that boost your stats. (Our favoured tactic.)

After school special

When you're ready to fight, head through the University's dimensional gate (it's in the lunch hall, naturally) and you'll be transported to a 3D battlefield grid. These open scrapping spaces all look different - one takes place in the Academy's home economics kitchen, another inside a giant version of Mao's heart - but the fighting itself is always based on the same awkward to get to grips with, but beautiful once you know how system. Yes, it's turn-based or 'phase'-based - but there's plenty of room for tactical manoeuvring between the 'your go, my go' change-ups. You can move each

> select the attack you'd like them to carry out, then execute it, gauging the effect on the enemy before deciding what to do with your other

> > little men. Like?

member of your party individually,

Ganging them all up on one enemy at a time, or building them into a massive human pile and unleashing devastating tower attacks. These plentiful tactical options are the real strength of D3.

What you do in... Disgaea 3



Sohei Niikawa talks to OPM

What is the inspiration behind Disgaea? It's a pretty crazy series...

We wanted to create something that no other company would make. In order to do that, we thought we had to make people giggle, pull stupid faces... so that's how we came up with the crazy systems and stories

Q All Nippon Ichi games have a 2D style. Are there any plans to use 3D characters?

A We haven't decided what we're going to do for the next Disgaea, but the 2D characters are appealing to many people. We would love to move onto 3D, but what we're thinking of is not 3D images like Final Fantasy, which is beautiful. We'd like to go a different way, where it looks like 2D, but moves like 3D.

Q How do you think up new ideas and features? Do you listen to fans, read forums, or just lock yourself in a room?

A There are two different ways. One is that we research what fans thought about Disgaea 2. We gather the information and respond to make it better. For the bad parts of the game, we fix them. We read the forums and that's how we improve the game system. For the new ideas, we have a chief developer at NIS who tries out something new, sees if it works, and if it doesn't, tries again, and keeps working on all these ideas that he has. He doesn't sleep at all [Laughs]. He does this for all NIS games.

Q This is a very Japanese game, in terms of its ideas and tactics. What are the challenges of bringing this to the West, particularly Europe?

A I trust the localisation team 100%. I want them to know and love this game. I understand that there are a lot of jokes that only the Japanese would understand. For example, in the US, where the characters are



talking about a Japanese TV show, we changed that to American Idol. So in Europe, you'll see something that refers to something only European gamers would know. I trust the translators and localisation team to do a good job.

Q Was there any feedback from fans about Disgaea 2 that led to changes for Disgaea 3?

A A lot of people said they wanted a character to be this way or that way – a personal preference. But overall, what we heard from fans was that the map was very hard to look at, especially in random dungeons that had different levels. Sometimes the characters were hidden under the towers. Throughout the series, we always had people saying the map isn't that good, and every time we try to improve. We're not satisfied with it in D3, so that's our homework for the next game. I had a letter from one fan that said 'why don't you make a more serious game?' If we make a serious game for Disgaea, then it wouldn't be Disgaea

Will you make a Disgaea game featuring online battles?

A At this moment there are no plans for online battles. We did multiplayer for the WiFi system for PSP and felt that people didn't really play it, so we don't really know if fans like it or not. But next time, we'll probably create something totally different for the PSP and try something new and see if people like it or not.

Adding to them are the brilliant returning Geo Panels. These are coloured floor panels that can be used strategically - to make everyone standing on a certain colour invulnerable, say, or sap their health at the end of each turn. Destroy a block and it causes matching panels to explode, injuring anything stood PlayStation.

on them. Play the system wisely and you can chain together explosions, dishing out massive damage as you go. It's like a puzzle within a puzzle.

Flaws are minor: the retro character design and lo-fi visuals may offend you HD obsessives, and the outright weirdness of the plot won't be for everybody. But this is an acquired taste, and a delicious one too: funny, original, brightly coloured and complex, clear a couple of

> hours on your timetable to get started and you'll be repeatedly rewarded by a gem of an RPG that's currently unique on PS3.

Kim Richards



Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

Crash Bandicoot: Mind Over Mu	tant
Fallout3	
Quantum Of Solace •	7 5
Siren Blood Curse (Blu-ray)	340
Silent Hill Homecoming	Sales .
Valkyria Chronicles	
Tom Clancy's Endwar	A Dig San Alle Standing Services
Disney Sing It!	
Guitar Hero: World Tour	

Naruto: Ultimate Ninia Storm SingStar: Singalong With Disney Sonic Unleashed WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2009 Armoured Core 4 Answers Call Of Duty World At War

Football Manager Handheld Mirror's Edge Motorstorm Pacific Rift Rise Of The Argonauts

Shaun White Snowboarding Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe

Need For Speed Undercover Tomb Raider Underworld Alone In The Dark

Resistance 2 SingStar: ABBA SOCOM Confrontation (Blu-ray)

GTI Club+

Legendary Lord Of The Rings Conquest Damnation

Prince Of Persia Killzone 2

Godfather Part II

Street Fighter IV Resident Evil 5

Tom Clancy's Hawx WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising Gran Turismo 5 Prototype

15	
Quillight	12
ctivision	3100

PS2/PSP Bethesda PS3 310ct Activision 31 Oct PS2/PS3 Sony 310ct PS3 Konami 310ct PS3 Sega 31 Oct **PS3** Ubisoft 7 Nov PS3 7 Nov PS2/PS3

Disney Activision 7 Nov PS3 Atari 7Nov PS₃ Sony 7 Nov PS3 Sega 7 Nov **PS3** THO 7 Nov Multi Ubisoft 14 Nov PS3

Activision 14 Nov PS3 Sega 14 Nov PSP FA 14 Nov PS3 Sony 14 Nov PS3

Codemasters 14 Nov PS3 Ubisoft 14 Nov Mult

21 Nov Activision PS2/PS Midway 21 Nov **PS3 PS3**

Multi

PS3

FA 21 Nov 21 Nov Eidos Atari 28 Nov Sony 28 Nov Sony 28 Nov

PS3 PS2/PS3 Sony 28 Nov PS3 Konami PSN Nov Atari Nov PS3 Nov PS3

Codemasters 5 Dec PS3 Ubisoft 5Dec PS3 • Sony PS3 Feb 09 Feb 09 PS3

Capcom Feb 09 PS3 Capcom Mar 09 PS3 Uhisoft Mar 09 PS3 THO Mar 09 PS3 Codemasters Mar 09 PS3

2009 PS3 Activision 2009 PS3

All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #24

Pull a sickie for... Prince Of Persia

My boiler has broken down. The repair man is on his way - reckons he'll be here some time between 9am today and 5pm tomorrow.

reviewPS2

Head to head



SingStar Singalong With Disney vs SingStar Boy Bands vs Girl Bands

The Lion King takes on Girls Aloud as two new PS2 karaoke games square up



Your inner child – or, more appropriately, your actual children – can belt out The Lion King's Circle Of Life, Aladdin's A Whole New World and the mighty Bare Necessities from The Jungle Book.







Manages to pack in everything from The Supremes to McFly, stopping off at Westlife's Flying Without Wings, The Spice Girls' Say You'll Be There and East 17's Let It Rain.

The interface has had a few tacky tweaks, with smiley-faced stars marking your progress instead of the usual 'awesome!' comments.

Top marks for using real clips from the Disney films though.







It lacks the polish of the PS3 version but the classic SingStar interface of music videos and easy peasy menus means picking out your favourite track is a breeze.

There are only 20 songs, and some of them are pretty short – Cinderella's Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo clocks in at just over a minute. Fine for teeny attention-spans, but stingy for everyone else.







Songs like Boyz II Men's I'll Make Love To You are tricky enough to warrant a whole load of practice sessions (or a binned disc), and the mix of oldies and chart fodder make it a SingStar favourite.

You won't impress any potential love interest by singing the weird reggae track from The Little Mermaid, but if the party in question is the sort with jelly and pass the parcel, this is ideal.







Like it or not, you know all these songs. Yes you do. Even the most serious indie fans can't stay grim faced when they're belting out a Busted classic. It's a karaoke party essential.

LOSER

Sleeping Beauty might be the kind of thing childhood dreams are made of, but if you ask us, Cheryl Cole in capri pants is a clear winner. Every time.





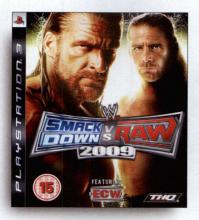
WINNER

Cause I Innov how I feel

A bout you now

Mmmbop might make your insides shrivel, but leave your muso pride at the door and this shiny pop-package will provide you with hours of embarrassing fun.







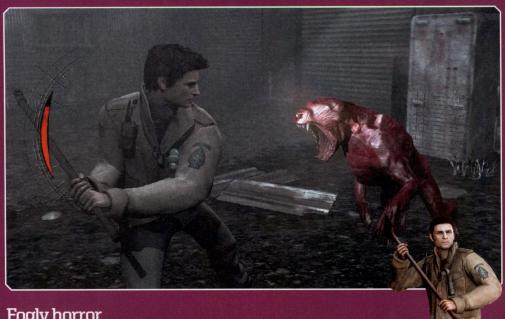






Tesco.com/games
We offer free delivery
to your door.
Perfect.
Wear out your console.
Not your shoe sole.

Silent Hill Homecoming



Fogly horror

Silent Hill Homecoming

Fails to teach a skinned dog new tricks



that needs a serious session with Super Nanny.



A guick lesson in the fine art of classic character design. If in doubt, show cleavage.



In keeping with the series, bosses look like they've been scraped off a butcher's floor.

gone mad, your spooky little brother is missing and the whole town is From the 'classic' faceless sex nurses to the bloodstained hospitals, it's twisted, foggy, and unmistakably Silent Hill.

You're Alex Shepherd, the unlucky schmuck who goes looking for answers only to find monsters, freaks and a mad mayor with a dark secret. Oh, and an awful lot of trudging this way and that, looking for tools, petrol, keys and important artefacts. There's lots of frustrating searching at the beginning of Homecoming but, in general, the scares are drip-fed nicely, such as when you're creeping through an old hotel with the static on your radio crackling, listening to trapped in a darkened room. It's just enough menace to spur you on.

When you're not exploring you're being stabbed, bitten or choked. Spidery corpses with blades for legs, skinned dogs and poison-belching beasts all give you a chance to try out your axe, knife and guns. Thanks to new developer The

Castlist



Poison belcher





Clawing mermaid



previous games, with counter attacks and commando-style rolls on tap. What's more, after five games' worth of panicked misses and early baths, you can finally aim firearms properly and take perfect headshots. That's not to say that fighting for survival in Homecoming is easy; the odd combination of a badly timed dodge and an awkward camera angle can still see you offering up your intestines as an entrée. Still, at least the shambling insults to God now show damage when you dish out payback. Watching fresh wounds open across the curves of Hill's grotesque nurses is truly unpleasant.

Monster madness

However, it seems that, torn between respecting the series' heritage and striking out in a new direction, The Collective's innovation begins and ends with the overhauled combat. PlayStation. boils down to trudging

which 80% of the doors you come across are Glance at a bloody wall or discarded wheelchair and a



line of uninspiring text appears at the bottom of the screen. It's just like you remember it... on PS2

And that's what stops Homecoming what Silent Hill has always done well buckets of atmosphere, music that saws through your nerves and some genuinely characters like Pyramid Head and Robbie The Rabbit goes against the whole hero-specific inner turmoil setup of the previous games. With a bolder

approach these cameos would feel like clever nods to the

attempt at fan service. A solid tribute act, then. but the handling of the

truly great. Rachel Weber

Lego Batman: The Videogame/Round-up



Block buster

Lego Batman The Videogame

Holy licensing agreement! It's a decent outing for the caped crusader





✓ If you were a scaly-skinned villain called Killer Croc you'd drive a massive alligator too.

he problem with Lego Batman?
Without a well-defined set of films
— like Star Wars or Indy — there's
none of the comedy recognition of seeing
tiny plastic men act out scenes you know
and love. There are too many versions of
Batman for Travellers Tales to pick just
one — if you're expecting a take on Frank
Miller's Dark Knight Returns you can
forget it — this is a mixed bag of them all.

Brick-a-bat

Here's why that doesn't matter: it's still
Batman. The game constantly chucks
recognisable characters at you, from
loyal butler Alfred (with painted-on
comb-over) to the Riddler (with
teeny question mark staff) and
the Penguin (with monocle
and purple brolly). There are
changes from the older Lego
games: you're pretty much
always Batman (or Robin, if

you're unlucky player two), and instead of switching between characters in story mode you just change suits. Batman has a heat-proof cowl for dancing across toasty areas, while Robin's got magnetic boots for clambering up walls. Combat's more hand-to-hand, too, though you can always fire off Batarangs to take out enemies or out of reach Lego bricks.

Other subtle changes: those precious blue studs, key to unlocking bonus items, are hidden in increasingly clever locations, and require real lateral thinking to access. The vehicle levels have improved – the Batmobile's suitably weighty, and crashing around destroying everything is a nice change of pace

from the puzzling. In fact, given the dodgy quality of Batman games in recent years, this may be the best one ever, with just one problem: who wants to be Robin? **Joel Snape**



NBA 2K9

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Take Two



With astonishingly authentic player animations, beautifully intuitive controls, and layers of

realism that EA's NBA Live 09 can only dream of, 2K once again strolls to the virtual b-ball championship despite being largely unchanged from last year's (also outstanding) instalment. It is tougher to defend without giving away a matchruining number of defensive fouls this year, so you really need to employ tactics and patience to succeed. Do that, though, and you'll be rewarded with the deepest basketball experience yet on console. The TV broadcast-style presentation is as likeable as ever, but the commentary repeats stock phrases way too often and the menu system is the definition of 'user

unfriendly'. Still, where it counts, 2K9 is hard to fault.

Andy Hartup



Blitz The League II

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Midway



This might just be the most stupid game on PS3 – the good news being that, for a time,

stupid is also very funny. Serving up seven-a-side American football with an outrageously violent twist, Blitz sensibly strays as far from Madden territory as possible to avoid comparison with EA's mega franchise. That means big-hitting high-tempo, arcadey gridiron, with injuries being played out in startlingly graphic fashion (an Inner Space-style camera showing muscles tearing and veins rupturing). Throw in mini-games like aiming a hypodermic into a crocked player's back, and you've a game that,

while unlikely to entertain for months, makes for a quality week's rental. **Ben Wilson**

Geon

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Eidos Bright, delightful, cube-controlling puzzler in which you navigate colourful levels collecting pellets to charge up, then try to reach your opponent's goal before they get to yours. Matches are frantic, short, and frustrating when you lose - exactly as it should be. Great value at a penny under five guid.

Sheep

7 Ben Wilson

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Empire Interactive Once pretty, now past-it PS1 puzzle game in which you guide a flock of the fleecy idiots around a series of spartan, not-as-fun-as-weremember-them levels, rescuing the bleaters within an imposed time limit. Even at £3,49 Sheen is more tough mutton than tender lamb. 3 Ben Wilson



Mega Man 9

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Capcom



Modern gaming has made us soft with its checkpoints, physics and decadent use of all

three dimensions, and now Mega Man is here to punish us for our sins with spikes, scissors and octopi. Ferociously true to the original 2D platformer's colours, animations, and impenetrable difficulty, the real shocker here is that while this looks like a retro resurrection, MM9 is actually a new, original game. Great stuff for masochists who think progress ended with 8-bit gaming – not so much if you're looking to have fun. Defeating the bumper pack of new bosses will get you new weapons, like Splash Woman's laser trident, but the trouble is anyone not suffering from NES-withdrawal



symptoms will have fired up Mirror's Edge long before that happens. **Rachel Weber**



reviewPS3 NFL Head Coach 09





■ The live auction system – giving you 60 seconds to outbid other teams for a player's services – is brilliant, and a must for next year's Madden.



Coach likenesses – like this one of Dallas Cowboys' Wade Phillips – are all outstanding.

Sideline sim

NFL Head Coach 09

Brutal introduction to gridiron management

op quiz. What's the difference between a nickel package and a dime one? If you think it's to do with buying drugs, you should probably skip this review and go read about beautiful Resistance 2 again. Go on, it's on page 78. The correct answer is that the dime features an extra defensive back.

Still here? You either answered right, and are therefore a card-carrying NFL fan, or you really do fancy playing something completely different. Even then, Head Coach still might not be the game for you. This is the deepest management sim EA has ever devised, and there are many things it does brilliantly; but accessibility isn't one of them. It's been deliberately designed to be the anti-Madden: a game by the hardcore, for the hardcore, and almost entirely impenetrable to anyone else.



■ The user interface is a breeze to get to grips with, and the team-specific backdrops look sweet.



Paint it red

Par for the course in Kansas City. That means spending hours tweaking your roster, adjusting the depth chart, negotiating with free agents, improving your boys' knowledge of plays, and getting rookies ship-shape for the NFL. All this is done using a simple, clean menu system, where a clipboard prompts you every time an essential task arises – like choosing what you want to concentrate on during that day's training, or negotiating with a free agent who could improve your side. (The latter system is great – it's basically a timed auction against other teams where you have to think on your feet.)

Gatorade shower

boosting or deflating your

side's confidence. You

can't control the players

yourself - this is strictly a

As for the matches themselves, think
Madden (the game uses last year's
engine), but with about a million more
options. You call every play and can even
redesign them as your players break the
huddle (and, in a masterstroke, even
export created plays to Madden
09), watch the action from
every conceivable angle,
and react to big moments
positively or negatively —

LINGO
Format PS3 ETA US import
Pub EA Dev EA Tiburon
Players 1-2 Web easports.
com/nflheadcoach 09 It's like
Seeing through the eyes of Bill
Belichick. And being terrified.

management sim – but for the most part it feels like you're in control.

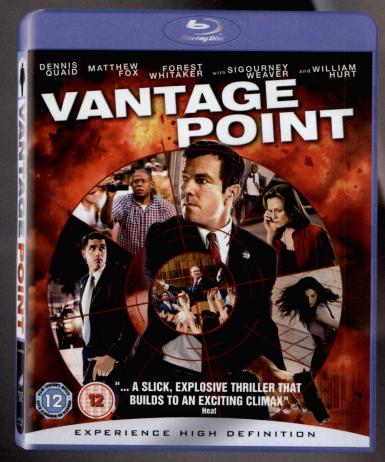
The vast depth of Head Coach is both its biggest strength and its Achilles' heel. I'm utterly obsessed with management games (OOTP Baseball 9 FTW!) but I can't play this for longer than a couple of hours without getting a headache – there's just so much going on, all of the time. Play it like it's meant to be played and it can take up to two hours to get through one match – and that's especially crushing if it ends in a defeat.

You could argue that real coaches have to cope with stacks of pressure, and that they must find it hard to pull themselves out of a funk when they lose.

In that way this is bitingly realistic, but you need to play it in small doses to prevent yourself from blitzing the family dog when you lose to the Oakland Raiders with a late field goal. **Ben Wilson**

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online_{PS3} Soulcalibur IV





Flashing blades

Soulcalibur IV

There's a new undefeatable enemy in Calibur, and his name is Lag



ou've spent hours perfecting vour custom character. Every item of clothing has been chosen to maximise combat effectiveness. The voice is just right, the name witty yet descriptive. And the first time you take your warrior online, who do you fight? Chances are it'll be an iron-clad Mitsurugi clone with a huge chopper and a shockingly unimaginative name. Tonight you face... The Butcher! For a game that offers almost as many creative options as variations in human DNA, playing Soulcalibur IV online reveals homemade characterisations

even professional wrestling would have thrown out for being 'too obvious'

It's not just player creativity that's in game modes here - Standard Versus (beating each other up) and Special Versus (beating each other up with stats-boosting armour on) - and no unlockables to be won from playing either. The appeal of the nets, then, is that it offers human opponents of every ability, a huge degree of character never-ending learning curve.

Rush tactics

Not that the learning starts straight away. At first, playing strangers online causes you to forget everything you have learnt in the solo game. The glorious ebb and flow of SCIV's eight-way movement system is replaced by the urge to stab your enemy in the guts as may times as possible

before they move. But get past your first win with fat-handed button mashing will usually be met by calm blocking and deadly counter-attacks from increasingly sophisticated opponents.

It pays, then, to create a fighter you can grow with. Special Versus mode rewards meticulous attention to detail when you're creating your warrior. However, many items that boost some stats also decrease others - giving you extra health but slowing your speed, say - while others grant you skill points that count towards additional abilities such as Auto Guard Impact or Soul Gauge Boost. So it's not just a case of optimising your equipment, but tailoring it to suit your particular fighting style. The downside is that this means grabbing bits of gear from all over, so a perfectly balanced character tends to jumble sale. If fashion is your passion

What you do in... Soulcailbur IV 2% Wishing amongst all the

loss on lag. Yup, again 14% Facing another name incorporates the word 'ninja'.

that descends into

murderous fighting.

18% Saying balls to honour and going for endless ring-outs

20% Blaming every

bloodshed and death, you had someone to talk to.

*20% Spending ages on 'the one' only to end up with a terrifying Freudian atrocity.

% Blocking for entire matches because nobody wants to make the first move

online PS3

Soulcalibur IV/Round-up





△ Mincing Voldo clones are the creepiest custom opponents you'll face by a stretch.

then Standard Versus is for you: here you can play dress-up but the changes are purely cosmetic.

Let's be friends

One big disappointment, though, is fun with customisation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, for a game that centres on hacking people's faces off, SCIV online is a pretty antisocial experience. When I first unleashed my monocle-sporting, umbrellatwirling fighter Sir Monty on the internet I expected bewildered laughter, at the least. Instead I was met by stony indifference as my opponent robotically attempted to knock me out of the ring using The Force Unleashed's yawnsome apprentice. The inclusion of an online Team Battle mode would have encouraged a bit more player playing SCIV against PlayStation. strangers can be a

In terms of gameplay, everything that made

strangely lonely

experience. Shame.

Soulcalibur IV our favourite PS3 fighter is still there, but ultimately how much fun you'll get from it online will depend on the quality of your connection. Like any beat-'emup, the precision timing needed to pull off complex moves means that the slightest lag will ruin your flow. In the event that your connection isn't up to the task, relocate your PS3 to a padded cell and prepare to become a ticking time bomb of volcanic fury every time you head online: battling jumpy characters like Cervantes and Taki with a sluggish connection feels like being slapped in the face by invisible hands you can't see, or stop.

So to make the most of Calibur online you'll need a fast connection, hours of practice and skin thick enough to get past the fact you're unlikely to make any new friends.

That way you'll reap the benefits of endless adversaries, a still-peerless game engine and the best fighter, creation mode on PS3.

Matt Elliott



Online round-up

With Leon Hurley



There isn't a whole lot that can redeem **Facebreaker**'s general awfulness. You can literally win by mashing buttons without looking at the screen. One thing that makes me hate it marginally less is the Boxer Factory. Upload photos through easportsworld.

com, or use a USB camera, and you can create your own fighters. Anyone. The potential for abuse is endless. I made Metal Gear Solid 4's Old Snake because I'm a geek but head to snipurl.com/3syvw and you'll find the likes of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, The Joker, Michael Jackson and Chuck Norris – all ready to be thrown into the ring. If only actually playing Facebreaker was as much fun as this.

Online Everybody's Golf World

Tour is part Harvest Moon, part Waiting For Godot. Create a cutesy avatar and you can enter a clubhouse, meet other players and arrange games. The trouble is that you can't just hop into a match: you have to sign up for a



tournament, which might be hours away, instead. Then you're left, wandering around with a load of munchkins, endlessly waiting... It's creepy, too, because it's hard to shake the suspicion that the Japanese girl typing "Hllo will you be m freidn?" might really be a 43-year-old lorry driver from Hull with a mattress in the back.





In one area **Turok** excels, reaching exciting new extremes It's definitely the brownest thing I've ever played online. And the most average, It's like sitting in a room slowly filling with mud but being too bored to care. The combat rarely excites but it does

manage to infuriate on a regular basis, thanks to a 'stealth kill' ability that enables players with a small knife to charge you down and cut you a new one even though you're dual-wielding shotguns. Even the addition of dinosaurs can't spice things up because they're penned in to specific areas of Turok's maps – which ends up making the whole experience feel like wandering into a militia-owned petting zoo.

Download of the month

The original **Pain** was a lot more fun than its simple premise ever suggested. By catapulting Travis, its masochistic hero, across a perilous city map you linked



together his painful-looking collisions with buildings, people and vehicles to build gigantic combos. Add-on **Amusement Park**, however, makes the initial release look like a demo. Where the first instalment was static bar a few, lonely, kerb-crawling cars and a solitary train that *might* hit you if the wind was blowing in the right direction, this new map has so much rattling around – roller coasters, log flumes, bumper cars – that the potential for ridiculous combos and collisions is endless. This is the kind of game PlayStation Trophies were made for.





PlayStation Official Magazine UK

onlinepromotion





Play against our FIFA side

Got an online team? Boot up and take us on



fter last month's open invitation to take part in trials for our FIFA 09 OPM side (we say trials, we mean 'massive dash to register online before everyone else') we've had a huge response. Hundreds of you logged onto Games Radar to put your names down for a place, and the final squad's now been chosen (lucky boys and girls, you know who you are).

Our first fixture's been lined up already – we'll be taking on an EA team made up of the game's creators, and you can read

the full match report next month. Our prediction: a 3-2 win for OPM with a late Clark winner (we don't call him Timmy Goalz for nothing. Yes, we really do call him that).

And don't worry if you didn't make it into our team. You can still play against us if you've already organised your own ten-men team by heading to gamesradar. com/fifa09onlinechallenge and entering your details. As the saying nearly goes: if you can't join 'em, beat 'em. We'll see you on the pitch, sunshine.









Sign up to play our FIFA 09 side now

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Home-made Snake, a junior despot writes, the lure of Trophies, PS3 MMOs, and crucial survival lessons learned from games.

Born leader

Civilization Revolution has changed my way of thinking. I don't usually go for RTS-style games, but playing the demo made me get it.

Now I feel confident that I would be a 'questionable leader' in real life. I'm English, so on my first play was as Queen Elizabeth I on the Chieftain difficulty level. For my next playthrough, I went for the King difficulty level as Genghis Khan. I found myself at war with India and in negotiations with Germany in just a few turns. This is a lot for a teenage boy like

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me. By the end of the game I had built the Manhattan project, nuked Hiroshima and destroyed many innocent cities. A few months back I took a job evaluation test, and my number one job was politician. I don't think so!

Shauny, by email

And to think; all this time the tabloids have been wittering on about cutlass-wielding hoodies, when it was junior dictators they should've been worrying about. Have a subscription to the mag, on the proviso that when your stormtroopers sweep across Europe single format videogames journalists won't be first against the wall.



I have created Snake on Soulcalibur IV. I decided to do the Solid Snake version rather than Old Snake, please note the trademark bandana. The equipment you have to use is: head; headband (colour 1 - 0: 44, 27), undergarments; usurper's suit (colour 1 - 2: 44, 27. colour 2 - 1: 44, 27), arm equipment; leather gloves (colour 1 - 2: 44, 27), leg equipment (colour 1 - 0: 44, 32). The physique is +5 but don't bother about the muscularity as it doesn't show on the usurper's suit. Closest I could get to his face is male face 11. The hairstyle's not exact, but I think

Play Civ Revand you risk awakening the despot within.



 □ Callum Macgregor made Snake in SC IV. Can you do better?

the closest thing is Short Rage with hair colour at 4:06, 28 including facial hair. Eye colour is 0:16, 27. Finally, skin colour is 0:11, 12. For those who want to know who I based him on, it was Taki because she is the stealthiest character in Soulcalibur IV. **Callum Macgregor**, by email

Shamefully, we've spent more time creating characters in Soulcalibur IV than playing the actual game. But rather than copy existing stars of other games, all we've managed is a conveyor belt of Amazonian beauties with hair woven from sunshine and carefully accessorised jewellery. Can they really ever be underdressed, though? (Trick question.)

Toy soldiers

I have come up with a war game that has more to it than just shooting and enemies. It's about the traumas of war, and how one man sacrifices his gun and health to save the lives of many, as he time travels. Imagine war-stricken soldiers who shed tears of guilt, with memories of the fellow soldiers they did not save. Imagine an Assassin's Creed-like 'animus' that the mentally affected soldiers use to change the present. Travelling back to change the past, to kill the enemies, to save their men, to win the war. The motto of these



Your letters

mentally scarred soldiers shall be "there is no going forwards without travelling back". As the men save the past, they save the future. It will be an intense. adventure with more than just guns and bullets... I send you this in the hope that you publish it, intrigue others, and that, one day, it will become a game. Zaim Beekawa, by email

It's an intriguing idea, with the potential for capturing the raw emotion and human drama of 21st century warfare in all its tragedy and complexity. We still get to use rocket launchers, right?

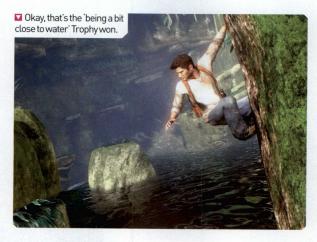
Glory hunter

In the October issue of OPM you asked Richard Lemarchand about putting Trophies into Uncharted. Is it just me that thinks developers are really missing a trick with Trophies? I bought and played Uncharted on release then traded it in. When they released the trophy patch I re-bought it and played through it again. I also purchased Super Stardust HD purely because of Trophies. Burnout Paradise is another game I've purchased again because of the promise of Trophies. At this stage, with few games supporting Trophies, any that do will get a boost in sales. I'm sure I'm not the only gamer who would go back to past greats to enjoy them again. Uncharted has recently seen a Platinum release, but I'm sure that the addition of Trophies is a key factor in why it's one of the best-selling PS3 games ever. Come on developers; you could be making money on your old games too, so please support Trophies! Chris Hills, by email

If Xbox 360 has taught us anything, other than to keep the warranty in a safe place, it's that grown men will play any game, even The Golden Compass, if there are some arbitrarily-awarded points in it for them. The same will be true for PlayStation's Trophies. Expect sales of games like Super Kitten Sudoku to soar once they become standard.

Multiplayer massive

Of course massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) have a place on PS3! In fact, I'm surprised we don't have one already. The idea that menus would be too hard to navigate is unfounded, as shown by Oblivion, where you're capable of outfitting an extremely detailed character with tons of weapons and equipment. With the upcoming Sixaxis keyboard we could even have





will have equivalent battery life to the current PSP: about four to six hours for games and about four to five hours for UMD videos.

☑ DC Universe Online

proves that not all

MMOs are elfcentric.

menus as large as in PC MMOs. If the upcoming PS3 MM0 games are a success then I expect an online Oblivion will follow. Imagine taking down an Oblivion gate with your mates from around the world, like that stupid dark elf who got himself and his friends killed. Geoff Jonas, by email

For those of you who don't speak unicorn, the good news is that not all MMOs revolve around farming magical herbs. The likes of DC Universe Online (be a superhero!) and The Agency (be a spy!) have obvious mainstream appeal. So, come 2009, you'll be able to admit you like MMOs without women reaching for the pepper spray.

Safety first

I've realised that over the years gaming has taught me a lot about survival. For example, if you ever get lost while driving through a small town in ridiculously thick fog, the first thing you do (after leaving the car door open just in case there's a child that needs to go missing) is find a length of lead pipe. It's then crucial to head to the closest, ominous, abandoned village, drawing attention to yourself by screaming at the top of your voice. After a spell of aimless wandering and unprovoked brutal attacks with your pipe on whatever strays across your path, find a strange looking liquid or piece of food, and consume it to gain odd abilities and/or powers. Follow these guidelines and you should have no problem staying alive. Kane Roderique-Walker by email

When we're lost we always head for a building that looks like it might be home to a bioengineering experiment gone wrong. Not because we're brave - it just seems the best chance of bumping into a muscled hero who'll kill all of the walking insults to God and help us back to the car.

Off the **Wall**



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group

End of Days
"If you really want to start talking about the end of the world, look up the date 21 December 2012. Those people who have played Assassin's Creed may recognise it. It's all to do with the Mayans..." **Christopher McDonald**

Pro Norris "I'm going to make a Chuck Norris sackboy and a Chuck Norris level so sackboy can do kung fu moves." John Cole

Anti-Norris "If your hero is Chuck Norris, then you may need to reassess your life... or maybe let the men in white coats do it for you."

Stewart Hitchcock

Selling sequels "MGS5: Snake Goes Senile... Play as a dithering Snake at an Alaskan old folk's home: traverse the halls hiding under a Zimmer frame. Tell boring stories to

reluctant teenagers." Steve Jesus Bamdad

Wrestle mania
"Beefed up sweaty men grappling doesn't appeal to you? For shame!" Chris Osborne

Friend of Dorothy "I want a SingStar Judy Garland, until that happens I am not interested." Joe O'Hara

Send your questions to: opm@futurenet.com

use up battery life quicker? The new PSP





whois...

Jade

Beyond Good & Evil's heroic hack

Sassy, sexy and strong. Three words that sum up Beyond Good & Evil's very own Lois Lane, Jade. As an orphan on the planet of Hillys she grew up tough, guided by her adoptive uncle, Pey'j. Tasked to discover the link between an attacking alien race, the DomZ, and Alpha Section, the military government supposedly committed to repelling the invaders, journalist Jade resists the urge to Wikipedia the lot and retire to the pub. Instead she scours Hillys for the truth armed with only a camera and her trusty dai-jo staff. With a sequel now being prepped for PS3 it's time to revisit her biggest byline.

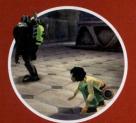
Finest moments

The truth is out there

Life saver

On the trail of government conspiracy, Jade sneaks through official building 'The Slaughterhouse',

The moment Jade rescues loyal uncle Pey'j from captivity, only to find him dead is utterly hear threaking. But wait! Her tears bring his deliciously streaky.



Section's HO, leading to a squeaky-burn rooftop chase complete with exploding glass, raging fires and eye-widening leaps of faith.



Wonder woman



Friends

He may be a humanoid pig, but 'pork chop' here is a talented mechanic and stalwart friend. He adopted Jade after her parents died, protecting her and teaching her invaluable skills. He's secretly the leader of underground resistance group IRIS.

PlayStation



General Keck

General Neck
Commander of the mysterious Alpha
Section, Keck is a bitter soldier through and
through. Even though Alpha is meant to be
ridding the planet of the alien DomZ, it's
soon clear it's actually aiding them, by
abducting civilians and dishing out violence.



High Priest DomZ

High Priest DomZ
The alien behind it all, the High Priest has gained control of planet Hillys' military force, Alpha Section, by manipulating General Keck. However its ultimate aim is to be reunited with Jade who, unbeknownst to her, can unlock his full, terrifying power.

Beastly bosses



Giant DomZ

mistake on its part, given that she's extra





The Reaper

emo Némo, but his bubble attack packs a

Pterolimax

This fugly blob has Pey'j clutched in one of its sticky claws, so Jade



Jade is a human/DomZ hybrid called a undercover code name that rebel unit IRIS gives Jade to protect her identity.



Jade's creator, Michel Ancel, also created limbless man thing Rayman and made the decent King Kong tie-in



The enigmatic teaser trailer for BG&E2 (snipurl.com/3tak8) shows Pey'j and Jade broken down by a desert highway, their lush Hillys home far, far away



BG&E's soundtrack is a stirring blend of strings, beats and haunting vocals, which is why the Video Games Live concert series features it in every show

Actor David Gasman, who plays Jade's backup-the clueless but well-meaning Double H-also voiced Ubisoft mascot Rayman and Lucas Kane from Fahrenheit





It doesn't matter how skilled a gamer you are. If your broadband's too slow and your ping times are too high, you're toast.

Virgin Broadband's top tier service is fastest for average ping, download and upload times compared to BT, Tiscali and AOL. That's because it comes down fibre optic cable. Other providers use telephone lines, so their broadband slows down the further you live from the telephone exchange.

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